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THE HEBREW PROPHET

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THE HEBREW PROPHET

BY

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METHUEN & CO.
36 ESSEX STREET W.C.
LONDON

First Published in 1905

L.I.F.E. College Library
1100 Glendale Blvd.
Los Angeles, Calif. 90026

PREFACE

"IT cannot be too often repeated," says Professor Ottley in his *Bampton Lectures*, "that prophecy is the dominant and distinctive element in Israel's religion." That is true of Israel's religion at its best; for the highest expression of religion in Israel is found in the writings of the prophets. In other places we find ethical and theological ideas which require to be explained as due to the natural state of things in a primitive condition of religion. But in the prophets we rarely find statements which do not stand good to-day. Indeed, the woes of the prophets were chiefly due to the fact that they were advanced too far beyond their time. The prophetic religion always soared far above the popular religion; hence the antagonism which the great seers always had to face. A people, like an individual, can never be known until seen at their best. To see the best in the religious life of the people of Israel, therefore, we must study the prophets.

But the Hebrew prophet was not a mere teacher of religion in the narrower sense. GOD created the

body as well as the soul, the world and all that grows thereon as well as spirits. GOD is the author of vegetable and animal as truly as of spiritual life. GOD is concerned that man should not only love Him with heart, mind, and soul, but also that he should love his neighbour as himself. Therefore GOD'S interest in man and in the world is broad indeed. Not a sparrow falls to the ground without our Father.

The prophet was in a measure cognisant of that great truth, which has been too much ignored by the Christian world, absorbed in the notion that GOD'S only concern was to get men into heaven, or to damn them in hell. Hence the prophet was a statesman, a sociologist, a political economist, as well as a theologian and a moralist: hence that broad interest of the prophet in all the affairs of men.

It is not to be overlooked, however, that prophecy in the person of Isaiah is a very different institution from what it was in the person of Samuel. The Old Testament writers, or the final editors of those writings, and still more their modern interpreters, have done much to confuse the development which is so marked a characteristic of prophecy. I have tried to show something of the course of this progress, or at least to tell my story in such a way as to make evident the development. Still, I have not been

satisfied to indulge in such a radical handling of the sources as some writers have done. For I have followed the principle that the statements of the Bible are to be accepted, certainly until we see convincing reasons to the contrary.

The reader will note that there is a certain amount of repetition, which my method of treatment has rendered necessary. Some few passages, like the story of Micaiah, and Amaziah's attempt to silence Amos, illustrate a number of points in prophecy, and so I have not hesitated to use them a second or even a third time. But I have endeavoured to limit the repetition to the material, and not allow it to extend to the treatment also. The quotations from the Holy Scriptures are occasionally from the Revised Versions, English or American ; but, as a rule, I have preferred to make my own translations.

In conclusion, I should like to say that I have expended a large amount of labour on this volume, and yet I only hope that its perusal may give to the reader the same great pleasure which its writing has given to the author.

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THE HEBREW PROPHET

CHAPTER I

THE POPULAR CONCEPTION OF THE PROPHET

KNOWLEDGE in its completest form is the result of observation and interpretation, and therefore the combined product of science and philosophy. Great reputations are justly attained either by the discovery of new facts, or by the new interpretation of facts already known. The man of science is pre-eminently the man of observation, and he is ever on the search for new facts. Some scientists, indeed, scarcely ever get beyond the gathering of data. Others have little interest in a work dealing so much with petty minutiæ; they prefer to give their minds to the penetration of the meaning of the facts discovered by others. But the best scientist works along both lines: he discovers a fact hidden from a gaze less keen than his own, and then places his fact in relation to other facts, so as to grasp its significance. Indeed, his perception of the meaning of

things is a large element in his ability to discover them.

The philosopher is the interpreter, and yet he is not merely a reasoner. He must also possess a wide and accurate knowledge of facts. The more comprehensive this knowledge, the more likely he is to be true in his reasoning. But he does not become a philosopher until he begins to interpret. His business is to tell the meaning of phenomena. The well-rounded man must be more or less expert in both observation and interpretation. He may at times use one faculty, at other times the other. The philosopher must occasionally be a scientist, and the moment the scientist begins to draw inferences from his observed facts he becomes in turn a philosopher.

The Hebrew prophet was a man of God, but he was also both a scientist and a philosopher; hence he was popularly regarded as pre-eminently a man of knowledge. We look upon the finished product of prophecy at its highest stage of development, that is, in the works of such prophets as Amos or Isaiah, and we call the prophet pre-eminently a teacher of righteousness. But the primitive Hebrew did not set value upon the seer on account of his knowledge of right and wrong, nor of his personally high character, but on account of his knowledge of mysteries which it greatly concerned man to understand, and which yet were hidden from the eyes of all but few.

Man could not be an intelligent being without perceiving that his life was strangely surrounded by mysteries. Questions such as these began to be

asked with great insistence. Whence came the world and the life which is upon it? What are the sun and moon and stars? Why does it rain or blow? Where is the object that was lost and cannot be found? What will be the outcome of any particular undertaking? Shall one recover from a sickness, or die? There has ever been a passion on the part of man to try to penetrate the mystery which shuts in his life, and there probably always will be. The answer to these and innumerable similar questions has always been persistently sought. The Hebrew looked to the prophet as the one raised up of God to solve the problems with which his life brought him face to face.

A sharp line of distinction has been drawn between the natural and the supernatural. It is a curious fact that this line has been persistently cherished both by scientists on the one side and by theologians on the other. The scientist has been contented to confine himself within the boundaries of the natural, and has become so distrustful of the knowledge of the supernatural claimed by theologians, that he has become sceptical in that sphere, and has been wont to label it unknown and unknowable.[1] The fatal mistake of the theologian was the admission of the line of demarcation. But such a mistake was not made by the Hebrew prophet. He was readily credited with power to perceive facts in the supernatural realm as

[1] Lately there has been a gratifying change in the attitude of scientists towards religious questions. They have learned that their so-called natural realm does not embrace the whole of life, and they have admitted it with characteristic frankness.

well as to grasp the hidden meaning of the natural. The prophet believed that all his powers were given of God, and he never troubled himself to label them as human or superhuman. His knowledge was trustworthy because given of God, and he was not concerned with the question whether it was a direct revelation or the Divine awakening of his natural powers. The sooner we get back to the prophet's position, the better for our religion.

Taking the supernatural out of the Bible is a process much feared in modern days; but the prophet would scarcely have understood the alarm. One person holds it as his opinion that Elisha found the axe which had fallen into the water by the miracle of making the iron to swim; another believes that he recovered it by feeling for it on the bottom with the stick which he had taken pains to cut. The latter view would be still accounted a dangerous error by some; but to the Hebrew one method was as much the work of the man of God as the other. The sacred writer has left the story[1] so that either of the above views is a possible interpretation. The historian recorded the facts, but stated no opinion.

The prophet was the man who had eyes to see and ears to hear. For every such person there is a world of knowledge undreamed of by duller souls.[2] The ability to see and hear was not looked upon by either the one who possessed it, or by those who honoured

[1] 2 Kings vi. 6.

[2] This is what our Lord meant when He said to His disciples, "Blessed are your eyes, for they see: and your ears, for they hear" (Matt. xiii. 16).

its possession in others, as a natural gift, in the sense of being common to all men. It was a distinctive mark of an office, and a direct gift of God. The prophet saw because God opened his eyes; he heard because God opened his ears. Yet the endowment of the prophet with knowledge was similar to the endowment of the judge with judgment, or the warrior with courage and skill. All these gifts came from the same source; God revealed His secrets to the prophet, gave wisdom to the judge, and "taught the hero's hands to war, and his fingers to fight."[1]

Some illustrations will best show the popular conception of the prophet, and the kind of knowledge which he possessed, or was thought to possess. Whenever one desired information about a matter beyond his own ken, he was wont to go to the prophet, because of his belief that nothing was too hard for his powers. An article might be lost; but it was still in existence, and might be recovered if one knew where to look. God always knew, and though His knowledge was not directly available by the loser, it was indirectly available, because the prophet was possessed of the mind of God.

Kish's asses had strayed,[2] and he followed the usual course of sending someone to hunt for them. A three days' search failed to trace the lost animals. Saul was about to give up and return home, thinking he had spent enough time in the search. But Saul's servant reminded him that they were near Ramah,[3] where dwelt Samuel the seer. Finding they had a suitable fee, they went to the city to inquire of the

[1] Ps. cxliv. 1. [2] 1 Sam. ix. [3] See additional note (1).

man of God. They applied to him, not because they deemed it possible that he had seen the asses, or had been told their whereabouts by one who had seen them, but because of their conviction that there was no limit to the seer's knowledge. They were not mistaken; for Samuel told them directly that the asses had been found.

Another illustration is afforded by the New Testament. Jesus was eating in the house of Simon the Pharisee.[1] A prostitute came in and anointed the feet of Jesus. She was a stranger to Him, but Simon knew her, or at all events knew her character.

The Pharisee sees in the incident a test of his guest, which he at first believes Him unable to meet. "This man, if he were a prophet," thus Simon spake within himself, "would have perceived who and what manner of woman this is which toucheth him, that she is a sinner."[2] Whether a woman of this kind was as easily recognisable then as now I do not know. But the Pharisee argues that if Jesus were a prophet, He would be able to discern the woman's true character with Divine insight, and would have spurned her from His presence. Her reputation might be concealed from the ordinary man, but not from a prophet.

By the exercise of his peculiar gifts the prophet was able to penetrate artificial disguises which would easily enough deceive another. Jeroboam was greatly concerned to know the issue of the sickness with which his child was laid low.[3] He dare not

[1] Luke vii. 36 ff. [2] Luke vii. 39.
[3] 1 Kings xiv. 1 ff.

himself face the prophet whose counsel he had flagrantly disregarded, so he sent his wife to ask Ahijah's prognosis. The king seems to have felt apprehension of the prophet's insight, and to have blindly striven against it; though he knew that Ahijah was blind, he bade his wife disguise herself. Man is prone to deceive himself when he can deceive no one else. As the queen approached the threshold, however, her true personality was perceived by the prophet, blind though he was, and he greeted her accordingly: "Come in, wife of Jeroboam; why feignest thyself to be a stranger?"[1] As if there might be a misapprehension as to the source of this insight, the historian tells us expressly that Jahveh advised the prophet of the queen's coming in disguise. But that is only the writer's way of telling us that the prophet's knowledge was due to a divinely given perception.

The mysteries of the past were as open to the prophet as those of the present. The first Hebrews to tell of the origin of the world were not scientists, but prophets—a fact which should never be disregarded by the interpreter. The nicest illustration of the prophet's knowledge of the past is found in the New Testament. Jesus was speaking with the Samaritan woman at the well of Sychar,[2] and incidentally laid bare the dark facts of her past life. As soon as she heard this story, which she assumed that He could know in no ordinary way, she exclaimed, "Sir, I perceive that Thou art a prophet,"[3]

[1] 1 Kings xiv. 6. [2] John iv. 5 ff.
[3] John iv. 19.

and adroitly shifted the subject of conversation. The ability which Jesus had shown of relating accurately the events of her career, His knowledge of which she regarded as supernatural, was proof positive that He was possessed of the prophetic gift. The insistence upon this point is shown by her comment to her townspeople: "Come, see a man, who told me all things that ever I did."[1]

But the greatest mystery of life lies in the future. We may know a good deal of the past and present; but the future is a blank. We should be largely controlled in our plans for the days to come if we could know what the outcome of those plans will be. Sometimes men embark in an undertaking with the surest indications of failure, as in hopeless wars. And yet there is a supporting hope in the feeling that however preponderant the chances are against success, it is always possible that a favourable issue will follow a bold action. It is generally recognised that success in life depends to a considerable degree upon a right forecast of the future. The question with a publisher, for example, cannot be wholly the merits of the manuscript in his hands, but must be largely the probability that the reading public will buy the book. The most far-sighted man in any calling has the greatest assurance of success.

Virtually all theists believe that God knows the future. Indeed, we may go further and say that the belief is general that God not only knows, but also controls the future. In fact, the belief in God's foreknowledge comes from the belief that the future

[1] John iv. 29.

course of events is in His hands to shape as He will. The Hebrews believed that the Divine guiding of events was more or less arbitrary, and that He might easily be induced to change the course of the world in one way or another. The idea that God might stay the course of the sun and moon that His servant might have adequate time to chastise his enemies was no stumbling-block to the faithful Israelite.

Was it possible for man to learn the secret purposes of God? For knowledge of the future would depend upon penetrating the counsels of the Most High. That knowledge would be of incalculable value to the people of God, if it were attainable. Now it is perfectly clear that the prophets and people alike believed that certain men were given that highly coveted knowledge. A few instances will make this clear.

Jahveh purposed to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah because of their wickedness. But the blow should not fall without warning. So Jahveh said, "Shall I hide from Abraham what I am about to do? since Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him."[1] The belief that Abraham was righteous, known of God, designated as the founder of a great nation, a prophet, led to the conviction that God apprised him of His intention to destroy the cities of the plain.

The broadest statement of this idea is found in an utterance of Amos. This prophet was explaining why he had abandoned his herd and his sycamore

[1] Gen. xviii. 17 f.

trees to fill for a time the office of seer. He was prophesying because he could not help himself. Jahveh had revealed to him His intention to bring punishment upon the Northern Kingdom. To know the mind of God necessitated action in accordance with that knowledge. The specific case of Amos is explained by the general principle: "The Lord Jahveh will take no action except He disclose His purpose to His servants the prophets."[1]

Attached to every court was a prophet, or company of prophets. Thus Gad is called "David's seer."[2] The office of such prophets, at least from the king's point of view, was not primarily to teach him right and wrong, though they usually did earnestly strive to that end; but their value to the king was conceived to be the knowledge of God's purposes which they possessed, especially their information about the future. Sometimes the prophet takes the initiative and tells the king the course of action which will lead to success and honour. Thus Deborah tells Barak that "Jahveh will sell Sisera into the hand of a woman."[3] But often the king consulted the prophet before embarking on an important undertaking. The illustrations of this function of the prophet are very numerous, and they show the firm conviction that the prophets did know the mind of God. Two examples will suffice.

David became discontented because, while he had built a house for himself, sumptuous for the times, the sacred ark of Jahveh was still sheltered in a

[1] Amos iii. 7. See additional note (2). [2] 1 Chron. xxi. 9.
[3] Judges iv. 9.

tent. The time seemed to have come when the symbol of the Divine presence, which had been necessarily carried about from place to place while the people had no fixed centre, should now be finally located at the newly established capital, and should be appropriately housed. But the king would not think of undertaking such a great and revolutionary project without assurance that his purpose would harmonise with the will of God, and that he would consequently be enabled to carry it to completion. To learn this he goes to His prophet. At first Nathan approved the plan, but was led afterwards to change his counsel, and say that God did not approve of the king's purpose, but that the building of the temple should be left for David's son.[1]

Ahab grieved over the loss of Ramoth-gilead, which had been wrested from his kingdom. A patriotic people always mourn the loss of territory, and lament the fate of their compatriots when they are attached to a foreign rule. This is especially the case if a section is annexed by a people deemed inferior. Ahab felt that his kingdom had suffered loss, and that the Ramoth-gileadites had suffered loss by their annexation to a people of another and inferior religion. He believed the time auspicious to recover the lost city. Especially did the plan augur success by reason of the alliance with Jehoshaphat,[2] the king of Judah, and the agreement of the latter to join in the campaign. But it was manifestly

[1] 2 Sam. vii. On this passage, see further in chapter xiii.

[2] Jehoshaphat was really the vassal of Ahab. See further in chapter iv.

desirable to know in advance whether the expedition would end in success or failure. That was known to God, and was believed to be ascertainable by man; therefore Jehoshaphat, who was a God-fearing man, notwithstanding his unholy alliance with Ahab, said to the king of Israel, "Inquire first, I pray thee, for the word of Jahveh."[1] A difference of opinion developed between the royal company of prophets and Micaiah, of which I shall have more to say later, but Ahab preferred the counsel most in accord with his own wishes, and therefore set out on a campaign which proved disastrous, the king being killed and the allied armies completely routed. The forecast of Micaiah was proved fully correct.

The prophet not only knew the facts which were hidden from other men, but he also was judged to know the meaning of facts; for there are things plain enough as facts, but mysterious in meaning. He not only had powers of observation unknown to others, but he was possessed also of a philosophy more than human. Thus the prophet was required for the interpretation of any unusual event, inexplicable to the ordinary human mind. To the God-fearing Hebrew there were no accidents in the government of the world. God held every natural force in His easy control. Extraordinary events were not the result of Divine caprice, but had a meaning and a purpose. It was necessary to discern this meaning and purpose, that the people might turn the event to their good, or at least keep it from doing harm.

[1] 1 Kings xxii. 5.

In the days before the monarchy, the Israelites were mightily oppressed by the Philistines. Every attempt to break their fetters resulted in riveting them the tighter. The question was inevitably asked why the people whom God had rescued from bondage in Egypt should be enslaved again in Palestine. The fact was plain enough, but the meaning of the fact was a mystery. Then Samuel the young seer came forward with the key to the problem. The sins of the people caused their misfortunes. If they would hope to win a victory, they must be able to engage in the fight under Jahveh's almighty protection.[1] This great boon could only be had on the condition of righteousness. The people followed Samuel's advice to put away the heathen worship in which they had freely indulged, and then they defeated their dreaded foe at the battle of Ebenezer.[2]

The mysterious fact might be a natural phenomenon. In post-exilic days there was a great drought and a visitation of locusts. The pastures were burned up; the streams were dry; swarm after swarm of the dread locusts swept over the land, destroying everything that was green. Why did God use His people so ill? How did it happen that Jahveh made Israel a reproach to his neighbours? These are questions which only a prophet is competent to answer, and Joel attempts to penetrate the meaning of these things in the book which bears his name.

There was a current belief that the prophet not only could know the future, but could also control

[1] 1 Sam. vii. 3. [2] 1 Sam. vii. 11 f.

its issues. It would be of little use to foresee coming events unless in some way the knowledge could be turned to advantage, so that evil might be averted and good assured. Joseph interprets Pharaoh's dream as a prediction of the seven years of plenty followed by seven years of famine.[1] The seer not only comprehends the portent of the dream, but he also sees how this knowledge may be turned to good account, though the preparation for the future requires no supernatural wisdom.

The prophet usually does not share the popular belief that he can control the coming events by virtue of any knowledge or power peculiar to him. Balak, the king of Moab, sent far away for Balaam the prophet,[2] not because he wished to know what the future relations between Moab and Israel would be, for he can himself see that clearly enough; but he summons the prophet because of his belief that he had power so to wither Israel by a curse that the invading nation would be powerless for harm. Balaam strenuously insisted from first to last that he had no power to change the purpose of God, and that no inducement would persuade him to pretend to a power he did not possess. "If Balak should give me his house full of silver and gold I could not go beyond the word of Jahveh my God."[3] The prophet was no fatalist; but he knew that the future

[1] Gen. xli.

[2] Paton gives plausible reasons for identifying Balaam with Bela the son of Beor, a king of Edom, mentioned in Genesis xxxvi. 32. See his *Syria and Palestine*, p. 152 f. Does this mean that Balaam the king was invited to bring more effective succour to Moab than curses?

[3] Num. xxii. 18.

was in God's hands, and that to change the future, one must change the purpose of God, and that could be done only by changing the conditions which constrained Him to act for the weal or woe of the nation.

There may be apparent exceptions, but they will not bear the test of a careful examination. The case of Elisha in the wilderness of Edom, for example,[1] is not an exception to the principle just stated, as a hasty glance will suffice to show. The allied armies are on the point of perishing for lack of water. The king of Israel does no more than bewail his unhappy fate and cast reproach upon God. Perhaps he had already tried the resources of his hundreds of subservient prophets and found no comfort. Jehoshaphat asked for a prophet of Jahveh, believing that by his aid the armies might be extricated from their perilous position. Elisha is summoned, and indignantly declares that Jahveh would not regard the danger of the Hebrews except for the presence of the pious king Jehoshaphat. The minstrel is called upon to play, and under this stimulus the prophet predicts that the trenches which he orders to be made shall be filled with water; and it happens in accordance with his prediction. But Elisha does not really pretend to a power by which he could fill the trenches with life-saving water, but only declares the purpose of Jahveh to save the king of Judah. The seer could learn what God's purpose was, but his foresight had no effect upon its accomplishment, except as it

[1] 2 Kings iii.

influenced man so to act as to make serviceable the favourable disposition of God.

I have gone into the common conception of a prophet fully, because of the general belief now that the primary function of the prophet was to teach the people to do the will of God. That the great prophets were teachers of righteousness is beyond question. That God sent them into the world for that purpose is told again and again in the Bible, and is not to be doubted for a moment. But I am speaking of the conception of the prophets as it was among their contemporaries. The people looked upon the prophets as men possessed of superhuman powers, and especially of superhuman knowledge, and it was this ability to know the otherwise unknowable which gave them their position in the nation.

CHAPTER II

REVELATION TO THE PROPHET

FROM the eighth to the fourth century B.C. the prophet was a conspicuous figure in Hebrew life. By the eighth century the office was fully developed and perfectly understood. But it did not attain its exalted station without a long preliminary course of growth. We must trace the growth from the primitive beginning, and see how it came to reach its peculiar influence and power.

It may be noted here that the prophet was not a figure peculiar to Israel, and unknown to other nations. In ancient times every nation had its prophets, and there were many features common to them all. And, for that matter, every nation has its prophets still. The Hebrew prophet was differentiated from other prophets in many respects, and yet was similar to those of other peoples.[1] When Balak, the king of Moab, desired the services of a seer, he sent to the Euphrates for Balaam.[2] Balaam certainly was not a Hebrew, yet his story is told in the Hebrew Scriptures without any intimation that

[1] See Briggs, *Messianic Prophecy*, p. 18 (ed. 1886). The lowest forms of Hebrew prophecy were most akin to that of other peoples. Other nations had few Isaiahs, but Balaams were found among them all.

[2] Num. xxii.

it is the record of an alien. Balaam prophesies by Jahveh, but he would have been the last one whose services Balak would have desired, had the king supposed him in any way affiliated with Israel. Among the Hebrews, however, prophecy was developed to a point which it never reached in any other nation, and our concern now is to follow the course of that development.

We have already seen that the prophet was regarded as essentially one possessed of knowledge which could only come from God. The path of the development of Hebrew prophecy is roughly marked by the manner in which God's will was revealed. We find that revelation coming to man in theophanies, dreams, visions, ecstatic states, and in direct spiritual enlightenment.

In the most primitive conception of God, He is represented as coming to earth and speaking to man face to face. God walks in the garden in the cool of the day and calls for the hiding man and woman.[1] God speaks to Noah to warn him of the coming flood.[2] So God spoke to Abraham, and to other patriarchs. Jacob named a place Peniel, because there he had met God face to face.[3] Moses was the last to whom God spoke in this way. In his case the direct revelation is looked upon as an unusual mark of Divine favour: "Jahveh spoke unto Moses face to face, as a man speaks to his friend";[4] "a prophet has not yet risen in Israel like Moses, whom Jahveh knew face to face."[5]

[1] Gen. iii. 8, 9. [2] Gen. vi. 13. [3] Gen. xxxii. 30.
[4] Exod. xxxiii. 11[a]. [5] Deut. xxxiv. 10.

In the larger number of theophanies, Jahveh Himself does not appear, but sends an angel to carry His message to man. The angel of Jahveh found Hagar in the wilderness, and sent her back to submit to her mistress.[1] An angel meets Balaam on his way to Balak and warns him not to go beyond the word of Jahveh.[2] Frequently there is a confusion in the story, the messenger being called at one moment an angel, at another Jahveh Himself. God directly commands Abraham to offer his son; but at the altar it is an angel who bids him stay his hand.[3] In the story of the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah we read that three men came to Abraham; then that Jahveh Himself asks why Sarah laughed; then that two angels visit Lot to get him out of the doomed city.[4] In the story of Gideon we are told that the angel of Jahveh came to arouse the hero to drive out the oppressing Midianites; a few verses further on we read that Jahveh turned to him and directed him to deliver His people.[5] In the old stories it is the usual thing to identify the angel or messenger of Jahveh with Jahveh Himself.[6] To these writers there was no essential difference between Jahveh and His messengers.

One would scarcely claim to-day that these stories are to be taken as strict records of fact. It is altogether unbelievable that God ever walked upon the earth or spoke to any person, as one man speaks to another. The higher truth was finally stated in the

[1] Gen. xvi. 7 ff. [2] Num. xxii. 35. [3] Gen. xxii. 1–11.
[4] Gen. xviii. 1–13; xix. 1. [5] Judges vi. 11–14.
[6] Moore's "Judges," in *International Critical Commentary*, p. 183.

Gospel: "No man hath seen God at any time."[1] But we need not on that account discredit the narratives altogether. It is certainly historical that Gideon led his people against the Midianites; but it is clear that while the inspiration to lift up his hand against the oppressor came from God, the message from God did not come by word of mouth. There are statements in many good historical narratives, whether ancient or modern, sacred or profane, which indicate the writer's opinions rather than actual occurrences. The careful student must learn to distinguish opinions from facts, and not to reject facts because he cannot accept the opinions with which they are accompanied; nor, on the other hand, must he feel bound to believe the opinions because stated in connexion with trustworthy facts.

Rightly understood, these stories are peculiarly serviceable for the purpose we have in view. Whatever we may hold, the earliest writers of Israel certainly believed that God spoke face to face with man, and this primitive conception of Divine revelation is what I wish to show. With the advance in religious culture, we hear no more of appearances of Jahveh. But the belief in the appearance of angels as the messengers of God persisted even through New Testament times, and was held by the early Christians as steadfastly as by the early Hebrews.

Very little need be said here about revelation by dreams. Yet the dream has a distinct place in a treatment of the method of prophetic revelation. From Deuteronomy xiii. 1, it appears that the

[1] John i. 18; see also the same idea stated by Jesus in John vi. 46.

dreamer of dreams was looked upon even as the prophet, as a person to whom the will of God might be revealed. The patriarchal stories are full of dreams, which the patriarchs showed a notable ability to interpret. At the Egyptian court there were wise men, one of whose functions was the interpretation of dreams. Joseph's skill as a dream interpreter gave him his exalted place in the land of Pharaoh,[1] to which greatness his own early dreams of the sheaves[2] had already pointed. The dream is used but little by the later and great prophets, though persisted in by the sons of the prophets. Like the speaking with tongues in New Testament times, the revelation by dreams seems to have been discredited by abuse. Jeremiah says that the lying prophets were going about with the cant phrase, "I have dreamed, I have dreamed."[3]

It is a matter of interest that in the Hexateuch revelation by dreams is characteristic of the so-called Elohist, and the stories of God's speaking directly to men of the Jahvist. These two methods of revelation may therefore represent not so much stages of actual development as the different points of view among the early sacred writers. Still it is plain that the Jahvist generally gives the more primitive conceptions of religion.

The dream belongs to the primitive age of Hebrew life, while the vision, which Delitzsch[4] rightly calls a higher step in revelation, is found chiefly in a later period. The vision begins when the dream leaves

[1] Gen. xli. [2] Gen. xxxvii. [3] Jer. xxiii. 25.
[4] *Commentary on Genesis* ii., p. 3.

off. But the two are not altogether mutually exclusive, for the dream plays a prominent part in Daniel, and even has a place in the New Testament; Joseph was warned in a dream to flee to Egypt.[1] The vision is mentioned on the other hand in connexion with Abram[2] and Jacob.[3] There is not always a strict differentiation, for Samuel's revelation in the night was by a dream, yet it is called a vision. The frequent expression, "visions of the night," probably refers generally to dreams. But the vision is found in connexion with prophecy at its highest stage of development. In fact, the term "vision" is from the same root as "seer,"[4] the old name for prophet. The dream belongs to any individual to whom God's revelation might come; the vision is limited for the most part to the prophetic order.

Vision is used frequently as a technical name for the prophetic revelation,[5] or for a particular message, as the announcement to Samuel of the fall of Eli's house.[6] Even the greatest of the prophets received his call in a vision.[7] The vision is found in several cases in the New Testament. Zacharias saw a vision in the temple when the birth of John Baptist was announced.[8] Visions were the means of revelation to Ananias, Cornelius, Peter.[9] Paul himself calls the appearance of Jesus on the way to Damascus a vision.[10]

A characteristic of the early revelations, especially

[1] Matt. ii. 13. [2] Gen. xv. 1. [3] *Ib.*, xlvi. 2.
[4] Or more accurately, one of the Hebrew terms for "seer," חזה.
[5] Isa. i. 1; Obad. 1; Nahum i. 1.
[6] 1 Sam. iii. 15. [7] Isa. vi. [8] Luke i. 22.
[9] Acts ix. 10; x. 3, 17. [10] Acts xxvi. 19.

by theophanies and dreams, is that they were given for the sake of the individual who received them. The Lord speaks to Noah that he may save himself in the ark. Joseph's dreams foreshadow his own brilliant career. In the more highly developed forms of revelation, God's will is disclosed through the prophet for the sake of the people, not for himself. In many cases, in fact, the giving of God's message involves great peril to the messenger; but God's concern was to save the people, even though His instruments were destroyed in the process.

The ecstatic state is another way in which the Divine knowledge was supposed to be conveyed to man. The case of Balaam is the classical example. The history, it is true, contains no express allusion to such an ecstasy. But there are some decisive hints. Balaam's first attempt to curse Israel resulted in forecasting the nation's great numerical strength. Balak thought that the prophet was unduly influenced by the sight of the whole Israelite camp; he therefore took him to a place whence he could see but a small part of the people. This influence is most simply explained on the supposition that Balaam uttered his oracles while in a state of frenzy. Moreover, the prophet seems not to have known in advance what his utterances would be; they were, in fact, quite contrary to what he desired. In one of the oracles we have allusions to "the visions of the Almighty" seen by the seer.[1] Then the prophet is described as "falling down, and having his eyes open." Altogether it is plain that he was in that

[1] Num. xxiv. 4.

state of ecstasy which was regarded as a favourable condition for prophesying among all nations of the world.

When Elisha was called upon to rescue the armies from their perilous position in Edom, and he desired to seek counsel of Jahveh, he calls for a minstrel, at whose playing it would be possible for him to reach that exalted state in which a revelation was most likely to come. That is clearly the meaning of the statement, "And it was as the minstrel played, that the hand of Jahveh came upon him."[1] This is the condition of the prophets of Baal, leaping and gashing themselves with knives as they cried, "O Baal, hear us!"[2] and also of king Saul when in his frenzy he lay down naked all day and all night.[3]

The Hebrews were themselves well aware of a higher form of revelation than that by dreams or ecstatic visions. They always looked back to Moses as one possessed of God's revelation in its highest form, and he is set in sharp contrast to the ordinary prophets of the time: "If there be a prophet among you, I will make Myself known unto him in a vision. I will speak with him in a dream. My servant Moses is not so . . . with him I will speak mouth to mouth."[4]

The knowledge given to Moses is distinguished by its clearness and definiteness as contrasted with the obscurer dreams and visions. To some prophets

[1] 2 Kings iii. 15. [2] 1 Kings xviii. 28. [3] 1 Sam. xix. 24.
[4] Num. xii. 6 ff. The text is corrupt in this passage, but the corruption does not affect the general sense as rendered above. For emendations, see Dillmann *in loc.*; and Gray, *Numbers*, p. 124 ff.

God revealed His will directly; not when they were asleep, or worked up to a state of ecstasy, but when they were most self-possessed. This highest phase has been called direct spiritual enlightenment.

Spiritual enlightenment is the common method of revelation to the great prophets of the golden age of Israel's religious development. To Amos, Isaiah, and the others of their kind, God did not appear as a bodily presence, nor did He send them vague dreams to perplex the mind. Occasionally they saw strange visions, which they interpreted as conveying a Divine message to the people. But generally God put His Spirit into their hearts, and thus they were endowed with a knowledge of the Divine will which gave them a strength of conviction otherwise impossible.

It has sometimes been supposed that the various phases of prophecy show a gradual decline in the manner of revelation. Modern criticism has enabled us to estimate the primitive traditions at their true value, and to see that there was a steady progress upward rather than downward. It was possible for Isaiah to know the mind of God more fully than Deborah or Samuel, because he lived in a more enlightened age, and knew better than to consult the dead on behalf of the living.[1] The men of the prophetic period had learned that the clearest Divine knowledge comes directly to the soul, and not through the medium of dreams or portents.

It should, however, be borne in mind that we are not to question the genuineness of a revelation by dream or theophany because of its medium. Men

[1] Isa. viii. 19.

believed that God spoke to them face to face or in other primitive ways. God has always been wont to reveal Himself to man in whatever ways man was able to understand. But in the lower form the possibility of error is so great that every instance must be judged on its merits. Primitive man generally believed that the dream was an objective reality. To dream of hearing God speak was actually to hear Him. To see God in a vision was to see Him really.[1]

Abraham was firmly convinced that God commanded him at first to sacrifice Isaac and then to substitute the ram. We see in the whole story the Divine teaching of the great lesson so clearly taught by a late prophet that the fruit of one's body was no expiation for the sin of one's soul.[2]

The message which a man read in his dream or vision was not always just what God intended; still it was often a groping after the truth which pointed the way to a higher conception.

The progressive character of the revelatory methods is perceptible from the seer's ability to command them. One can have but little control over his dreams. Visions may be largely self-induced. The aid of a minstrel or dancing or singing will generally bring on the ecstatic state, at least to the person practised in the art. The direct spiritual enlightenment is always available for one who has eyes to see and ears to hear. Balaam must sleep over the problem involved in Balak's request; Isaiah could answer his problems immediately.

[1] See article "Dream," in Hastings' *Bible Dictionary*.

[2] Micah vi. 7. See Newman Smyth, *Christian Ethics*, p. 161.

CHAPTER III

THE PROPHETIC INSTITUTION

WE turn now to the development of Hebrew prophecy as an institution. The institution is not, however, uniform and simple, but varied and complex. We shall best be able to cover the ground by dividing the prophets into two classes. In one class we include Samuel, Nathan, Elijah, Amos, Hosea, Isaiah, and, in fact, the whole line of great men who lived and prophesied as independent individuals. The other class is composed of the so-called "sons of the prophets," whose operations were conducted in companies, and who belonged to a fixed order. This latter class will be reserved for consideration in the next chapter.

When we speak of the prophets we usually mean the men of the first class, and they are indeed men worthy of the distinction accorded by the name. They were men pre-eminent in their day, and held a high place among the great men of Israel. They maintained their greatness because they were free and independent, preserving their individuality to the utmost. We rarely find them working together. Even when they belonged to the same time and place, they co-operate so little that it is not easy to determine their relation. Isaiah and Micah, for ex-

ample, prophesied to the people of Judah at the same period. It is frequently assumed that Micah was a disciple of his greater contemporary. But there is no sure warrant for this assumption. These men worked always as individuals, never as members of an institution. Nevertheless, the great prophets had so much in common that we may for convenience speak of them as an order. The history of this order may readily be traced from its lowly origin to a position of great influence and power, and then again through a stage of decline to its final disappearance.

If we read the Old Testament in the traditional way, prophecy seems to go backward rather than forward. That conception is not to be pronounced *a priori* impossible, but is nevertheless untenable, because it is contrary to historic facts. To those facts we now turn. Moses stands as a great figure at the very beginning of Hebrew history; and in later ages he was deemed the first and the greatest prophet. Many centuries after his time it was declared that "no prophet like Moses had since risen in Israel."[1] Nothing higher could be said even of the Messianic prophet than that he would be like Moses: "A prophet from thy midst, of thy brethren, like unto me, shall Jahveh thy God raise up for thee."[2] St. Peter quoted this prophecy as fulfilled in Jesus Christ.[3] But was the greatest prophet at the beginning?

Modern criticism has enabled us to read the early history of Israel in a truer light than was formerly

[1] Deut. xxxiv. 10.
[2] Deut. xviii. 15.
[3] Acts iii. 22.

possible. Some scholars have, indeed, gone to extremes in recasting the early history; nevertheless, some reconstruction is inevitable. The work of Moses is now known to be very different from what our fathers supposed. A vast amount of tradition has gathered about his great name. But sound critical opinion rather confirms the greatness of the famous refugee who, under the guidance of Jahveh, led his people out of the land of Egypt, and who did so much to place the institutions of Israel on a solid foundation. Moses may loosely be called a prophet,[1] but his chief functions were not prophetic. He was careful to provide a successor, but he chose a man qualified for military leadership, as the times demanded, rather than for prophetic guidance. Moses is called a prophet only in the later writers. Even in the priestly writing, Aaron is appointed to be Moses's prophet;[2] but the word as there used means no more than spokesman or mouthpiece. Therefore prophecy can scarcely be said to have begun with the great law-giver.

The Hebrews came to believe in the course of time that prophecy was as old as the world. Zacharias sang in his Benedictus—

> "As He spake by the mouth of His holy prophets
> Which have been since the world began."[3]

St. Peter uses the same words in his speech in Solomon's porch.[4] Long before the time of the apostle, Hebrew writers had applied the term

[1] Art. "Prophetic Literature," *Encyc. Bibl.*
[2] Exod. vii. 1. [3] Luke i. 70. [4] Acts iii. 21.

prophet to their heroes, even to Abraham;[1] but they were certainly speaking from the point of view of their own day, not from the condition of the time of Abraham. St. Peter showed that he was possessed of an idea of the prophetic institution which was more in accord with the records of his people. In the address already cited he says, "All the prophets from Samuel and them that followed after, as many as have spoken, they also told of these days."[2] Samuel, not Moses, is deemed the founder of the prophetic order. This suggestion is worthy of most careful consideration. Samuel was not only a conspicuous figure in early Israel, but he was also the first prophet of whom we have any adequate knowledge.

The books of Samuel are composite, some of the documents being very old, others belonging to a period long after the time of Samuel. In one of the earliest documents we find an old gloss, which nevertheless proves to be an important and trustworthy archæological note: "Formerly in Israel, the man who went to inquire of God, said thus: Come and let us go to the seer: for he that is now called the prophet was formerly called the seer."[3] It is quite impossible to determine when this gloss was written. Whenever it was, prophet was the current name for the man of God, and seer had gone out of common use. But the writer positively identifies the familiar office of the prophet with the obsolete office of the seer. There may have been certain changes

[1] Gen. xx. 7. [2] Acts iii. 24.
[3] 1 Sam. ix. 9. See additional note (3).

in the office as it developed, but to this writer the prophets were the successors of the seers. Let us see if his statement may be verified.

The term prophet is applied to Abraham,[1] Moses,[2] Aaron,[3] Eldad and Medad,[4] Miriam,[5] and to Samuel.[6] There is no evidence, though, that the name was in use in the days of those to whom it is given. All of the writings in which this term is used are later than Samuel.

There are two Hebrew words for seer—*ḥozeh* and *ro'eh*. The former is never applied to Samuel; the latter is rarely applied to anyone else.[7]

The first occurrence of *seer* is in 1 Samuel ix. 9, and the term is applied to many later persons. In 1 Chronicles xxix. 29, we find all three terms for prophet applied to different men: "Samuel the seer (*ro'eh*), Nathan the prophet, and Gad the seer" (*ḥozeh*). In Isaiah xxx. 10, the two words for seer are applied to different classes: "that say to the seers (*ro'im*) see not, and to the prophets[8] (*ḥozim*), prophesy not unto us right things." Amos is called a seer by the priest Amaziah. The same term is generally applied to the earlier men of God, and broadly speaking, the gloss states the matter correctly. It is certain that "prophet" persisted, while "seer" dropped out of common use.

[1] Gen. xx. 7. [2] Deut. xxxiv. 10. [3] Exod. vii. 1.
[4] Num. xi. 26 ff. [5] Exod. xv. 20. [6] 1 Sam. iii. 20.

[7] The only exception is Hanani (2 Chron. xvi. 7). In 2 Samuel xv. 27, the word is applied to Zadok, according to the English translation; but that rendering is clearly wrong, and the text is certainly corrupt. See proposed emendation in Budde, *Bücher Samuel*, *in loc.*

[8] This is the only place in the English versions where *ḥozeh* is rendered prophet. That is because we have no other word for seer.

This stage in the history of Hebrew prophecy gives us a starting-point from which we may trace our way forward with certainty. For Samuel's age and all later times we have good historical sources, even if sometimes the information is meagre. For the period before Samuel we have but scanty information, and the sources need to be carefully sifted in order to make sure that the writer does not ascribe to the early days conditions existing in his own, but unknown to the age of which he writes. We still speak of the stationary East, and assume that what is seen there to-day has always been so. Many historical writers, like the Chronicler, fell into the same fallacy. Institutions with which they were familiar were so permanent that they seemed always to have been, and the historians jumped to the conclusion that they had always existed. It was a natural mistake for one living in the prophetic age, himself endowed with the prophetic spirit, to infer that prophets had existed from the beginning.

The age of Samuel marks a great transition in the development of Hebrew life in the broadest sense. A more settled order was brought in by his administration. Before his day was over the monarchy was securely established, so that it survived to the exile. The people took up permanent abodes and occupations. The days of wandering were giving place to a period of settled life and fixed occupation. The popular desire for a king shows the growing sense among the people that a more centralised rule was necessary. The new condition of the prophetic life

was a part of a general movement touching the whole life of the people. The rising against the Philistines, which was largely due to prophetic instigation, made a new era possible.

Before the time of Samuel, prophecy was at most occasional and crude. The description in 1 Samuel iii. 1, "The word of Jahveh was precious in those days; there was no widespread vision,"[1] was equally applicable, so far as we know, to any previous period.

Priest and prophet were not sharply differentiated. Samuel himself exercised the functions of both offices, and probably many of his predecessors had held the same double office. The judges exercised prophetic as well as political powers. The fact that "all Israel from Dan even to Beersheba knew that Samuel was established to be a prophet of Jahveh,"[2] shows that a new order of things existed, and yet that the prophet was not an unknown figure. Whatever information the early Hebrews may have had, however, we are forced to the conclusion that they have passed on very little knowledge of those early times to us.

There are some hints of those who may be called

[1] This verse has perplexed the commentators. Smith says: "The qualifying word ('widespread') may mean public or widespread, but there is reason to suppose that the original reading is lost" (*Int. Crit. Com.*, *in loc.*). The passage, however, yields a good sense: "The word of Jahveh was weighty [*i.e.* influential] in those days, because there was no general vision." In the writer's time, seers were numerous and visions were multiplied; but their counsel was not followed. In the days of Samuel, seers were unusual, and their words had great influence. Men had particular visions of import to themselves; but prophecies conducive to the general welfare were almost unknown. The new phase of prophecy is the appearance of a man of God whose messages are given for the good of the people.

[2] 1 Sam. iii. 20.

prophets. Deborah is called a prophetess,[1] or, in the older version of the story,[2] "a mother in Israel." We only know of her arousing the people to war against the invading Canaanites. But as the younger version of the story says that she "judged Israel at that time,"[3] it is very likely that her office was permanent. Barton[4] calls attention to the fact that Deborah sat under the sacred palm, and that the proximity to the tree helped her inspiration. But Moore[5] holds that iv. 5 is added by a later editor, and that we should emend the text of verse 4, and render, "delivered Israel at that time," referring to this particular event. The name "mother in Israel," as commonly interpreted, implies a permanent place of influence; but as this term occurs elsewhere only in 2 Samuel xx. 19, where it means a city, it has been held that a town is meant here.[6] Whether her functions were only for the time or not, Deborah's act was regarded as inspired of God, and she was therefore looked upon as a prophetess.

It is said that Jahveh sent a prophet (whose name is not given) to the Israelities to reproach them for disobedience.[7] Likewise "a man of God" was sent to Eli[8] to declare the downfall of his house and to give the reason therefor.[9]

From such instances it is possible that there were

[1] Judges iv. 4. [2] Judges v. 7. [3] Judges iv. 4.
[4] *A Sketch of Semitic Origins*, p. 89.
[5] "Judges," *Int. Crit. Com.*, p. 113; Nowack, *in loc.*
[6] See Moore on v. 7. [7] Judges vi. 8. [8] 1 Sam. ii. 27.
[9] Stade says: "These anonymous men of God are everywhere the creations of later redactors" (*Geschichte*, i. 182 n). Such an opinion may not be altogether disregarded.

prophets in early Israel of whom no mention is made. But so far as we know, there was no man in those days whose whole life was given to the prophetic office. Judges, priests, and others now and again received messages from God, and were accordingly called prophets. Amos bears striking testimony to the fact that prophecy had a real place in the ages preceding his own: "I raised up of your sons for prophets, and of your young men for Nazirites";[1] but his words may apply to persons already known to us.

I am well aware of the difference between the view of Samuel's prophetic work, set forth above, and that of Budde,[2] and other writers.

Budde divides the books of Samuel into the older and later narratives. Such a division is essential to the right reading of the history. But Budde accepts the statements of the older sources and generally discredits the rest. We are much indebted to this accomplished scholar for his valuable contributions to the early history; but it seems to me more reasonable to credit the later sources except in so far as they contradict the statements of the earlier, or describe conditions inconsistent with them. The earliest history is most likely to be accurate, but is not necessarily so. 1 Samuel vii., for example, describing the efforts of the Israelites to throw off the oppressive Philistine bondage under Samuel's leadership, belongs to the late sources; therefore Budde rejects it. But there seems to be no good reason why Samuel may not have persuaded the people to try

[1] Amos ii. 11.

[2] See his *Religion of Israel to the Exile*, p. 93 ff.

to drive out their foe, even if his success was limited. The partial failure of this attempt would explain Samuel's next move, which was to make a more stable combination of the tribal forces under the head of a Benjamite king.

According to the older source, which Budde seems to accept, "Samuel is only a priest and seer of the old type in an Ephraimite country town." He finds confirmation of Samuel's obscurity in the fact that a person like Saul had not heard of him. But Saul's servant knew his reputation as a seer, as well as his place of residence. Budde looks upon Saul as the prophet of his age rather than Samuel. Of this more will be said in the next chapter. But there seems to me to be ample justification for the view widely held by Hebrew writers that Samuel was a prophet, and that of no mean order.

After Samuel's time there is scarcely a period during which there was not one or more choice spirits called of God who gave up their lives to the interpretation of the Divine will for the sake of their fellowmen.[1]

There was an idea more or less prevalent that the office was to be continuous. Elijah was commanded to set up kings in both Syria and Israel, "and to anoint to be prophet in his place Elisha, the son of Shaphat of Abel-meholah."[2] Not every prophet after this time, however, exercised his office per-

[1] Here again I am constrained to depart from Budde's opinion. He distrusts the Elijah stories, and has no confidence in what is said of occasional prophets in the early part of the Davidic dynasty (*op. cit.*, p. 102).

[2] 1 Kings xix. 16.

manently. Even Amos, the first of the literary prophets, was called to prophesy to Israel for a brief time, and then probably returned to his herd. There may have been other instances of the same kind. But most of the prophets were called to a life office, and were not permitted to lay down their work, even when they grew weary of their task. Jeremiah had been called upon to say so much of woe that he resolved to speak no more in the name of Jahveh. But Jahveh would not have it so. The message was in the prophet's soul, and would be spoken even if it must burn its way out.[1] Jonah was unwilling to say a word in Nineveh that might lead the hated enemies of Israel to repentance and pardon. But his story is told to show that God's will cannot be balked by His prophets.

There were many prophets in Israel between Samuel and Amos whose writings have not come down to us, if, indeed, their prophecies were ever put into writing at all, but about whose work we have considerable information in the historic books. Among these may be mentioned such conspicuous examples as Nathan, Gad, Ahijah,[2] Elijah, Elisha, Micaiah, Ahaziah.

Their functions were in part much like those of

[1] Jer. xx. 9.

[2] It is an interesting fact that there is no mention of a prophet during Solomon's reign. Nathan anoints him king, and Ahijah inspires Jeroboam to wrest a large part of the kingdom from Rehoboam, Solomon's son. But there is no record of a prophetic utterance or act between these two. Solomon saw visions himself, and was not the kind of man to invite or even tolerate interference from any quarter.

the later prophets, except that they seem to have striven more to lead the court in the right way than to teach the people. That inference is certainly deducible from the records, but inasmuch as the historians are concerned chiefly with the history of the kings, they would naturally tell only so much of the prophet's story as served their purpose. The history of Isaiah in 2 Kings xviii.–xx. tells us nothing of the prophet's character as a great teacher of the people, but only of his office as a prophet of the court.

The golden age of Hebrew prophecy begins with Amos about the middle of the eighth century and extends down to the exile. Ezekiel, whose life and work were in the land of captivity, already shows the beginning of a decline. He employs symbols very largely, and depends upon the pen as well as the voice. Moreover, his life was far removed from the stirring scenes which gave the prophet his great opportunity. In the great unknown prophet or prophets, to whom we owe Isaiah xl.–lxvi., we find again, and for the last time, a prophetic voice which is not shorn of its power. Joel, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi, and others whose anonymous work has been embedded in the writings of older prophets, contain some passages of great power, but, as a rule, these are decidedly inferior to their great predecessors of the Assyrian age.

After Malachi the voice of prophecy is silent until revived in John Baptist. For much of this period, it is true, we must argue from silence; but for the Maccabean age we have ample assurance that there

was no prophet. The defiled altar was torn down, but what to do with the profaned stones was a grave problem. The people finally shelved it by laying the stones in the mountain "until there should come a prophet to give an answer concerning them."[1] The knowledge required could only come from God. There were priests at hand, but knowledge of the Divine will was not given to them. The question was one for a prophet, but the prophet was lacking. As it is pathetically put in one of the Psalms of the period :—

> "Our signs we see not, nor is there prophet;
> With us is not one that knows how long."[2]

In this dark age, however, there was the hope that prophetic voices would again be heard in the land. In the gloomy days of the early exile, a poet bewails the fact that though prophets exist, there is no vision from the Lord;[3] yet visions came in due season. So now, though there was not even a prophet in Judah, there was the assuring hope that God would send again these chosen counsellors. The Jews and priests were ready to acknowledge Simon, the brother of Judas Maccabæus, as leader and high priest, with the stipulation that he was to hold the chief place only until God sent them a faithful prophet.[4] Little did those people realise how long their hope for the reappearance of prophecy would be deferred. This incident marks the final transfer of power from the hands of the prophets to those of the priests, a subject of which I shall have more to say hereafter.

[1] 1 Macc. iv. 46.
[2] Ps. lxxiv. 9.
[3] Lam. ii. 9.
[4] 1 Macc. xiv. 41.

There is another class of men who may barely be called prophets, whom we may mention for the sake of completeness. These are the authors of the pseudepigraphic prophecies, such as the Assumption of Moses, the Book of Enoch, the Wisdom of Solomon. The study of the written Word had taken the place of the fresh utterance from the prophet's mouth. The great names of the past were highly venerated. If a real prophet had risen, he would scarcely have been able to get a fair hearing. His words would have been measured, not by the standard of truth, but by their agreement with the written Law. That basis of judgment made the thorny path of John Baptist, of our Lord Himself, of Paul and other apostles, as well as many a Christian minister of later ages.

This esteem of the written Law, which is displayed somewhat wearisomely in Psalm cxix., as against the living Word, must be given full weight, or we shall do injustice to the unknown authors of apocryphal books. Schürer expresses but a part of the truth when he says that these men "had no longer the courage to confront their contemporaries with the proud claim to have their words listened to as the words of God Himself, but who rather seemed to think it necessary to conceal themselves under the guise of someone or other of the acknowledged authorities of the olden time."[1] It is true that a prophet should boldly declare his message, whether the people will bear or forbear; but we cannot blame these men very severely that they elected to

[1] *Jewish People*, div. ii. vol. iii. p. 45.

put forth their message in a form which would most surely get it a prompt hearing, especially as there were then no literary ethics to bar their way. We should rather rejoice that in such way as they could, men were still striving to keep religion a vital factor in Jewish life. For that was the essential task of the prophetic institution.

CHAPTER IV

THE SONS OF THE PROPHETS

IN the time of Samuel a new institution arose in connexion with prophecy which deserves a further study than has been given to it by any writer. Various scholars have touched the subject incidentally, but an exhaustive treatment is still a desideratum. Budde seems to me to have missed the point by regarding these guilds as the real prophets of the early time, and then to lose sight of them entirely. I cannot treat the subject here as fully as is desirable, but shall attempt to gather the essential facts and present them in a convenient form.

Samuel directed the newly anointed Saul to return to his home, and said that on his way he would see certain signs, among which would be "a band of prophets, coming down from the high place with a psaltery and a timbrel, and a pipe, and a harp, before them; and they will be prophesying."[1] It is evident that this band was a company exercising a corporate rather than an individual office. Whence did they arise? And what were their functions?

This is the first mention of such a body in the

[1] 1 Sam. x. 5. It should be noted that this passage belongs to the oldest part of the narrative in the books of Samuel.

Old Testament, and there is nowhere a statement to explain their origin. As Samuel was the leader of such a company,[1] it has been frequently assumed that he was the founder of the order.[2]

In the absence of further information, this origin can only be assumed as probable. It is perfectly possible that such bands were in existence even long before,[3] though we know nothing about them. In that case Samuel would have associated with this order, just as Elisha did at a later time.

But while we have no certain information as to the origin of these prophets, which is comparable to

[1] 1 Sam. xix. 20. Literally, "And Samuel standing appointed over them." The two participles are, as Driver says (*Heb. Text of Samuel*), "peculiar and suspicious." H. P. Smith rejects "standing"; the verse would then read, "And he saw the band of prophets, and Samuel appointed over them." Paton says, "It is safe to infer that he organised the ecstatics into communities, and thus made their influence more effective" (*Syria and Pal.*, p. 173). It is clear that Samuel was the official head of this company. Kraetzschmar holds that Samuel is confused with the guild by a very late writer who no longer understood the distinction between the "seer" and the prophetic bands (*Prophet und Seher im alten Israel*, p. 23).

[2] See, for example, Schultz, *O. T. Theology*, i. 240 f. So Ottley says, "It is significant that Samuel's distinctive work was the regulation and organisation of prophetism" (*Bamp. Lect.*, p. 270).

[3] Budde argues that the order was new, since the prophets were looked upon in 1 Samuel x. 10 ff as something noteworthy, and were regarded with a certain distrust (*Bücher Samuel*, p. 68). The elders appointed by Moses are said to have prophesied as a body when they were clothed with the Spirit (Num. xi. 25). Such ravings as the sons of the prophets indulged in may be intended. Kraetzschmar, on the other hand, holds that those prophets are of Canaanitish origin, and explains the hostility to them on that ground. As there were prophets of some sort among all the Semitic peoples, the Hebrews may have been influenced by their neighbours. But it is doubtful if the institution was taken over ready-made. At all events, there is not sufficient evidence for that view.

the order of the Nazirites,[1] we have ground for plausible conjectures. It is not certain that Amos refers to the order when he says, "I raised up of your sons for prophets," but it is highly probable. That would show that the order had been established long before his day, and, in spite of its degradation, was regarded as a Divine institution.[2] To Amos it would seem perfectly possible that the institution may have been divinely founded, even though its present representatives were so unworthy.

It was the custom of every great prophet to gather disciples about him. Thus Elijah had Elisha as a personal attendant; the latter had Gehazi, as well as others of the prophetic order. Isaiah had disciples,[3] Jeremiah had Baruch;[4] John the Baptist gathered disciples about him, and so did our Lord. Moreover, the familiarity of the Jews with this custom is unmistakably shown by the wrath of the Pharisees because "Jesus was making and baptising more disciples than John."[5] Samuel himself had begun his career as a disciple of Eli.

The most natural name for such a disciple, following good Hebrew usage, would be a son of the prophet. Elisha calls his master "father."[6] Samuel probably gathered many such disciples and trained them for special duties. It would be inconvenient to

[1] See Amos ii. 11.

[2] A fact which counts against the Canaanitish origin.

[3] Isa. viii. 16.

[4] Though perhaps he was rather secretary than disciple. Still he read prophecies of his master to the people, and probably wrote most of the biography of Jeremiah.

[5] John iv. 1.

[6] 2 Kings ii. 12.

take such a large company with him as he went about to sacrifice at the various shrines which were scattered through the country; therefore he would have a body at each place, and thus it would happen that "sons of the prophet" would be found in many different parts of the land.

Budde makes Saul rather than Samuel the head of the prophets;[1] but I think without sufficient reason. Saul only catches the frenzy when under the influence of the prophetic band. What befell him had happened to the messengers sent by him.[2] It is true that "the Spirit of God rushed upon Saul when he heard these words [telling the plight of Jabesh-gilead], and his anger was kindled fiercely."[3] But this is said also of Samson,[4] of David,[5] and represents the common Hebrew idea that any person doing a great act was moved by the spirit of God. That moving does not constitute a prophet. If Saul had been conceived as a prophet his visit to the witch of En-dor would be unaccountable.

Paton supposes these prophets to have come into being at the time of the Philistine invasion; Samuel's work was to organise these ecstatics into communities, so as to make their influence more effective.[6] While Samuel was the head of such orders, I believe it necessary to distinguish sharply between the rank and file on the one hand, and such leaders as Samuel and Elisha on the other. There is no evidence that Samuel led them in their violent religious exer-

[1] *Religion of Israel*, p. 95.
[2] 1 Sam. xix. 18 ff.
[3] 1 Sam. xi. 6.
[4] Judges xiv. 6.
[5] 1 Sam. xvi. 13.
[6] *Early History of Syria and Palestine*, p. 173.

cises,[1] and I believe that he was not in the habit of doing so. Macdonald concludes that inasmuch as the learned theologian al-Ghazzali took part in the wild dervish exercises, there would be no difficulty in supposing that Samuel should take part in the prophetic ecstasy.[2] But al-Ghazzali joined the Sufis in order to stimulate his own religious life. Samuel organised the prophets to quicken the religion and patriotism of the people.

If Samuel gathered a band of disciples at each of the shrines he was wont to visit, then we have at hand the explanation of two facts in connexion with these prophets. In the first place, we find them in the earliest days always attached to a sanctuary. Saul met the band of prophets coming down from the high place, a technical term for a local shrine. Samuel was at the head of a company of prophets at Ramah, which was his home, and at which place he had built an altar.[3] We know that such bands were stationed at Bethel[4] and at Jericho.[5]

Then, again, it is perfectly certain that the sons of the prophets were to be intimately associated with the priests.[6] Samuel went about the country exercising the functions of judge, prophet, and priest. But he established the monarchy to take the place

[1] Unless we regard 1 Sam. xix. 20 as such evidence. Budde says correctly that Samuel sharply distinguishes himself from the prophetic hordes (*Bücher Samuel*, p. 139). Kraetzschmar says that *ro'eh* (seer) was applied to Samuel to distinguish him from the *nebi'im* (prophets).

[2] *J.A.O.S.*, xx. 93.

[3] 1 Sam. vii. 17.

[4] 2 Kings ii. 3.

[5] 2 Kings ii. 5.

[6] "Shall the priest and prophet be slain in the sanctuary of the Lord?" (Lam. ii. 20).

of the judge, and the order of prophets with functions distinct from the priests. After this time the connexion between the priest and the higher prophets became less and less close. Most of the great prophets either were not priests[1] at all or rarely exercised the priestly office. The members of the prophetic guilds, on the other hand, while never serving as priests, maintained a close connexion with the priesthood.[2]

Elijah, too, offered sacrifices. The prophets were apparently important figures at religious festivals. There is a story of Elisha, which has a distinctly archaic flavour, and which shows that the people were accustomed to go to him at the sacred seasons. When the Shunamite, whose son had died, proposed to go at once to the man of God, her husband asked her: "Why art thou going to him to-day? It is neither new moon nor Sabbath."[3]

Isaiah, and others of his order, class priests and prophets together in their denunciations.[4] These two classes joined in the persecution of Jeremiah.[5] But the clearest connexion is shown in Jeremiah v. 31: "the prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests bear rule at their hands";[6] that is, the power of the priesthood was maintained by the false oracles of lying

[1] Jeremiah and Ezekiel are the only ones who belonged to the priestly order.

[2] See W. Robertson Smith, *Prophets*, p. 85. This author holds that at Jerusalem the prophets were subject to the priesthood (*ib.*, p. 389). Jer. v. 31 does not support his opinion. On this passage see further in text.

[3] 2 Kings iv. 23. [4] Isa. xxviii. 7; Zeph. iii. 4; Jer. *passim*.

[5] Jer. xxvi.; cf. xviii. 18. [6] Additional note (4).

prophets.[1] In post-exilic days the people sent to the priests and prophets to learn whether they shall keep up a certain fast day, as if uncertain which class should answer this question.[2]

The office of the sons of the prophets is more easily determined than their origin. A company was coming down from the high place, where they had taken part in some ceremony. Musical instruments were played by those who went before them, while they were prophesying.[3] This prophesying does not mean the uttering of oracles, or the proclaiming of religious truth, but was probably something like the incoherent cries one may hear at a primitive revival. The frenzy of the Baal prophets, described in 1 Kings xviii. 28, was simply an exaggerated form of that which was wont to seize the sons of the prophets at a time of great religious excitement. Like all such forms of religious excitement, this prophesying was contagious. When the messengers of Saul came to Ramah to take David, Samuel protected him by having the company prophesy in the presence of the messengers, so that they caught the spirit and began to prophesy likewise. Three sets of messengers were in turn incapacitated for their errand by the wild frenzy induced by prophetic contagion. Then Saul came himself, but he caught the spirit, and exceeded all others in the wildness of his frenzy. So great was his

[1] Cf. Jer. vi. 13; viii. 10. [2] Zech. vii.

[3] So the prophets of David were said to prophesy, stimulated by the music of harps, psalteries, and cymbals (1 Chron. xxv. 1). The music was designed to induce the ecstatic state.

excitement that he tore off his clothes; and so great was the resulting exhaustion that he lay down there naked all that day and all that night.[1] H. P. Smith therefore scarcely exaggerates when he says that "we have here a company of dervishes[2] engaged in their religious exercises," and explains the proverb, "Is Saul also among the prophets?" as a mark of surprise that the son of a well-to-do man should be found in a company not highly esteemed.[3]

Some scholars hold that the sons of the prophets arose from political conditions, and their chief purpose therefore was patriotic. Day calls them "ardent patriots."[4] Paton speaks of them as "bands of religious devotees traversing the land, awakening the patriotism of the people."[5] Budde says, "The prophets appear as second saviours and new founders of Israel's nationality and religion."[6] Winckler regards the prophets as political agitators.[7] Kraetzschmar, to whose pamphlet on *Prophet und Seher im alten Israel* I gladly confess my indebtedness, regards

[1] 1 Sam. xix. 18 ff. This passage is comparatively late, and is regarded as another attempt to explain the proverb, "Is Saul among the prophets?" Such a proverb would be applied to many occasions. However late the narrative is, it is perfectly possible that just such an event took place. Budde distrusts the story altogether. At all events it represents a correct idea of the habits of the prophetic guilds. The older story (1 Sam. x. 10) represents Saul as catching the contagion in the same way. See also *Encyc. Bibl.*, col. 3857.

[2] In fact the study of the life of Mohammedan dervishes gives the fullest light for an adequate knowledge of the methods of the sons of the prophets.

[3] *Inter. Crit. Com.*, pp. 68, 71.

[4] *Social Life of the Hebrews*, p. 60.

[5] *Syria and Palestine*, p. 173.

[6] *Religion of Israel*, p. 88.

[7] K.A.T.[3], 171.

these prophets as enthusiasts for the old conditions of political and religious life. He thinks that Saul's meeting the prophets was no accident, but a carefully devised plan by which these enthusiasts might arouse his patriotic and religious spirit. I am persuaded that Schultz states the matter more correctly: he holds that the aim of these prophets was religious, not political.[1] They were at the beginning organised as firm adherents of the national God. Their patriotism was merely such as was involved in their religion. But the fact of the matter is that we know but little of the motive of the sons of the prophets.

As early as the days of Saul the bands of prophets were consulted for advice. Saul was driven to go to the witch of En-dor because "Jahveh did not answer him by dreams, by Urim, or by the prophets."[2] It is plain that the prophets here are the guilds, who in their ecstatic state were supposed to reveal the will of God.

W. Robertson Smith[3] says that Elijah had little to do with the "sons of the prophets." That is apparently true of the later period of his life, but not of the earlier. Elijah fled from the north when Jezebel's persecution became so severe that prophets were no longer safe in bodies. The reason he gives for abandoning his field is that he only was left of the faithful, and his life was in imminent danger.[4] The prophets whose slaughter he laments were companies with which he had been associated. It is not likely that there were other conspicuous individual

[1] *O. T. Theol.*, i. 242.
[2] 1 Sam. xxviii. 6.
[3] *Prophets*, p. 85.
[4] 1 Kings xix. 10.

prophets who became victims of Jezebel's wrath. In the great sacrifice on Mount Carmel, Elijah says with a tone of bitter regret that while there are four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal, he was obliged to stand alone as the representative of Jahveh,[1] for his fellows had all been slain. Obadiah regards his act in saving a hundred of the "sons of the prophets" from the royal persecution as a deed sure to win favour from Elijah.[2] If the great prophet had had nothing to do with the guilds, Obadiah would scarcely have made such a plea. The rescue of a hundred of these prophets incidentally shows how numerous these guilds had become.

Elisha certainly stood in close relation to the prophetic guilds. He was connected with them as a sort of father superior. Whether this was an inheritance from his great predecessor or not we cannot tell positively. But we have found reason to believe that all the conspicuous prophets of the early days were the heads of the guilds. Elisha, according to the story told in 2 Kings ii., had especial reason to look with favour upon them, because he had seen evidence of their power in the prediction made by company after company that his master would be taken from his head. On the other hand, these prophets recognised that the leadership of Elijah had fallen to him.[3] This incident confirms our belief in Elijah's connexion with the guilds. Elisha himself had probably belonged to the order of prophets, and was closer to Elijah than the rest because of

[1] 1 Kings xviii. 22. [2] 1 Kings xviii. 13.
[3] 2 Kings ii. 15; cf. v. 14.

personal superiority. That Elisha was the head of the guilds is abundantly testified. He felt called upon to feed these prophets in a time of dearth,[1] and to put himself at their head when they proposed to build larger quarters.[2] When Elisha resolved to anoint Jehu king of Israel, it was a member of this order who not only carried the message to the captain, but who was delegated actually to anoint the new king.[3] The distressed wife of one of these prophets turns naturally to Elisha for succour.[4] Delegations from these guilds were wont to come to Elisha for counsel.[5]

But such a relation between a true prophet and this order did not persist. In Elisha's own time we find a condition of affairs very different from what we should suspect from his history alone. Micaiah the son of Imlah may have begun his career as one of the *nebi'im* (sons of the prophets); but, if so, he soon severed his connexion completely. The attitude of this prophet requires fuller exposition.

In the Syrian wars Ramoth-gilead had been wrested from the Israelites, and Ben-hadad had not kept his promise to restore it.[6] Ahab resolved to take it by force. Jehoshaphat the king of Judah and vassal of Ahab[7] agreed to Ahab's proposal for a joint expedition. But Jehoshaphat was unwilling to enter

[1] 2 Kings iv. 38 f. [2] 2 Kings vi. 1. [3] 2 Kings ix.
[4] 2 Kings iv. 1. [5] 2 Kings v. 22.
[6] 1 Kings xx. 34. Or it may be, as Paton holds (*Syria and Palestine*, p. 208), that Ahab had lost Ramoth-gilead in a war two years before, *i.e.* in 855 B.C.
[7] That Jehoshaphat was actually in vassalage to the king of Israel is shown conclusively by Paton, *op. cit.*, p. 204.

upon a campaign without assurance of the favourable disposition of Jahveh. Ahab therefore summoned his four hundred prophets. This band knew what answer the king expected. He was one who was willing to consult Jahveh, provided Jahveh would answer in conformity with his own purposes. He had trained his prophets to their business, which was to comprehend the royal rather than the Divine will. They drew their inspiration, not from heaven, but from the throne. They answered with a unanimity readily comprehensible to us: "Go up, that the Lord may deliver it into the hand of the king."[1]

But Jehoshaphat was not satisfied. He knew that these were accredited prophets. That they prophesied by Jahveh, and not by Baal, is expressly stated by Micaiah himself.[2] Nevertheless, the king of Judah saw plainly that they were merely echoing the wishes of his ally. Insincerity is ever difficult to disguise. Doubtless these subservient seers bowed too low in their ardour to interpret the royal will as the command of God. Therefore Jehoshaphat asks if there is not another prophet of Jahveh by whom the Divine will may be ascertained. The king of Judah assumed that all the prophets who would unscrupulously bow to the will of Ahab were already marshalled in imposing array. Any prophet not in that company testified by his absence that he was of another spirit.

[1] 1 Kings xxii. 6. The parallel passage, 2 Chron. xviii. 5, has "God" here instead of "the Lord," not instead of "Jahveh," as erroneously stated in Hastings' *Bible Dictionary* (art. "Micaiah"). Kittel, it is true, supposes "Jahveh" to be the original text (*Könige*, 172).

[2] 1 Kings xxii. 23.

And so it proved. The only other prophet, at least of Jahveh, was Micaiah the son of Imlah, who was probably in prison at the time.[1] But he was unpopular with the king, because he prophesied evil and not good.[2] What a witness Ahab was against himself! The only prophet in the land who dared to tell the truth could never predict good for the king, but only evil. Micaiah was urged to confirm the forecast of the others, but replied, like the true man that he was, "what Jahveh saith to me, that will I speak." At first he repeated the words of the other prophets, but with such scornful irony that even Ahab was not deceived.

Schultz seems to misunderstand this passage entirely. He says that Micaiah "had at first, in accordance with the Divine will, to say what was untrue, because he was aware that God intended to beguile the king."[3] When pressed for a frank answer, Micaiah shows his hand, not only predicting disaster to Israel, but adding that God Himself had laid a snare for the wicked Ahab by inspiring His prophets to deceive him.[4]

[1] Josephus says that Ahab had already put Micaiah in prison, because he had predicted that he would be defeated and slain by the king of Syria (*Antiquities*, viii. xv. 4). The first part of this statement appears to be correct. Ahab directs that Micaiah be sent back to Amon, the city officer, implying that he had previously been in his custody. But the reason given can scarcely be right. It looks as if Josephus had taken Micaiah's present prediction as a reason for a previous imprisonment.

[2] 1 Kings xxii. 8.

[3] *O. T. Theol.*, i. p. 257.

[4] Budde infers from this statement a higher opinion of these prophets than mine; for he says they were deceived by Jahveh. Such an idea was by no means repugnant to the Hebrews, as we may see

I have dwelt here at some length upon this striking story, although it has been already referred to, because it is the first case of a solitary prophet taking issue with the company of prophets. Later this condition becomes the rule. No great and true prophet after this time ever had much sympathy with the sons of the prophets. The attitude of Micaiah is the attitude of all the rest, and for the same essential reason: that these prophets did not seek to follow the counsels of God, but of men, and no one can ever be a true prophet and do that. A part of the evidence of the hostility of the great prophets towards these guilds must be reserved for a later chapter, but enough is introduced here to show the true condition of things. There is so much material that but a small proportion can be used.

First, however, we may note that the beginning of the decline of the sons of the prophets can be unmistakably traced to the persecution of Jezebel. That wretched woman was bent upon introducing her own religion into the nation of Israel. She brought a great company of the prophets of Baal to Samaria. Every prophet of Jahveh was obliged to change his god, seek uncertain shelter in hiding, or die.[1] All the best and bravest gave up their lives,

from Deut. xiii. 3 and Ezek. xiv. 9. But, however possible for Micaiah to conceive of Jahveh sending one of the host of heaven to be a lying spirit in the mouth of Ahab's prophets, such a conception is impossible from the Christian point of view. Jesus said the devil was "a liar, and the father thereof" (John viii. 44). It is significant that a snare assigned to Jahveh in an early writer (2 Sam. xxiv. 1) is by the late Chronicler ascribed to Satan (1 Chron. xxi. 1).

[1] 1 Kings xviii. 13.

or were scattered in flight.[1] Those who remained bowed the knee not so much to Baal as to the royal authority. They were a selected list of weaklings who were ready to prophesy by any god, and to give any answer required by the king. The order seems never to have recovered from this blow. The blood of the martyrs may have been the seed of the Christian Church, as Tertullian said, but it was the ruin of this particular institution of the Jewish Church. They doubtless served a good purpose in the early days, though their office was a humble one; but the prophet who values peace above truth has always in the end met the same doom. That course may lead to a great popularity for a season, but it cannot endure the searching test of time.

Budde seems to think that the sons of the prophets were never held high in the popular esteem. He interprets that puzzling question, "And who is their father?"[2] to mean that "no one knows to whom they belong: they are stray vagabonds without name or pedigree."[3] H. P. Smith is unable to get a satisfactory reading, and takes refuge in the usual method of supposing the text corrupt.[4] Schultz notices that the Greek reads, "who is his father?" *i.e.* Saul's. He understands the question to be an inquiry concerning the one who had taught Saul to prophesy, as the sons of the prophets had been taught by their father or chief. Driver calls this rendering easier, but weak. At all events, it is more intelligible than

[1] See additional note (5). [2] 1 Sam. x. 12.

[3] *Religion of Israel*, p. 94. So Kraetzschmar, *Prophet und Seher*, p. 10. [4] *Int. Crit. Com.*, *in loc.*

the Hebrew. Whether Budde's interpretation is right or not, it is very probable that the people never had a good opinion of these prophets.[1] But let us see how they were regarded by the prophets whose works have been approved by time, and whose life record shows that they were endued of the Spirit of God.

When Amos was commanded by Amaziah to leave Bethel, he set the example which has been followed by true prophets in all ages; that is, he explained why he was prophesying at Bethel, and declared why he could not obey the high priest's order. In his *apologia* he says, "I am not a prophet, nor am I a son of a prophet . . . Jahveh took me from the flock, and Jahveh said unto me, Go prophesy unto My people Israel."[2] By prophet and son of a prophet, Amos means the same thing, the professional order. He does not belong to that order; he is speaking by Divine command, not by royal sanction. Therefore he cannot heed the interdiction. The implication is plain that the members of that order were subservient to the king's pleasure. There is a note of indignation in Amos' words, as if he said, "Am I one of these cringing prophets, that you expect me to disregard the expressed will of God, because my speech is not agreeable to the king?"

Except in this case, the great prophets do not call these men "sons of the prophets," but simply

[1] Jehu's fellows ask, "Why did this crazy fellow come to thee?" And Jehu replies, "You know the man, and his talk" (2 Kings ix. 11). There is no attempt to disguise the contempt for the prophet; yet he led them to revolution. [2] Amos vii. 14 f.

prophets. They do not discriminate in terms. They call the prophets, whom God has raised up in all ages to guide His people, and those who were leading them in wrong paths, by the same name. The Greek version applies the term "false prophet" to Hananiah, but the term is not found in the Hebrew Old Testament anywhere. And yet it is easy to tell when the great prophets are speaking of the order. In the cases cited below, it is clear that the sons of the prophets are meant. The scholars who have written on this subject generally do not regard these prophets as members of the guilds. They regard the sons of the prophets as existing only in the earlier period. Nothing seems to me more certain than the fact that the *nebi'im* denounced by all the writing prophets were members of the guilds established by Samuel, and that this order existed all through Old Testament history. It was not a mere temporary institution, but persisted to the end of the Old Testament era.

The professional prophet was not to be depended upon. He did not rise above his fellows, he did not see clearly when others failed; but when the people stumbled in the day, the prophet would stumble with them in the night.[1] The holy city was disobedient and all classes shared in the wrong; "princes, judges and priests have been no support, and her prophets are boasters and traitors."[2] These prophets are untrustworthy; they do not speak the word of God, but teach vanity, and speak a vision of their own heart.[3]

[1] Hosea iv. 5. [2] Zeph. iii. 4.
[3] Jer. xiv. 14, xxiii. 16; Ezek. xiii. 3.

They even steal a message, "each one from his fellow."[1] They have given way to the most deadly formality; they are careful to preface their prophecies with the accepted introduction: "oracle of Jahveh"; but that form is no guarantee of the genuineness of the message to which it is prefixed, and in fact has been so abused that the prophets are forbidden any more to use the familiar term.[2]

These prophets have misled the people and have become a potent cause of the decay and downfall of the nation. They have supposed that they could lightly heal the wounds of Judah by the false cry of peace when there was no peace.[3] The poet, looking back and reviewing the causes which led to the ruin over which he laments, sees how the prophets have added to the trouble: "Thy prophets have seen for thee false and foolish visions; and they have not uncovered thine iniquity, to bring back thy captivity, but have seen for thee false oracles and causes of banishment."[4]

Not only were they not sent by Jahveh, but on the contrary, He utterly repudiates them: "They say 'oracle of Jahveh'; but Jahveh hath not sent them: yet they look for the fulfilling of their word."[5] "I did not send these prophets, yet they ran: I did not speak to them, yet they prophesied."[6]

[1] Jer. xxiii. 30. Clerical plagiarism appears to be an old sin. Strange that any Christian minister should justify a grossly immoral practice condemned by a Hebrew prophet. We may take courage from the belief that the practice of stealing sermons and sermon material is growing less.

[2] Jer. xxiii. 34 ff. [3] Jer. viii. 11, xiv. 13; Ezek. xiii. 10.

[4] Lam. ii. 14; cf. iv. 13. [5] Ezek. xiii. 6. [6] Jer. xxiii. 21.

The picture of the moral character of these prophets is a very dark one, but nothing shows better the high moral ideals of the great prophets than their conviction of the hopeless inconsistency between Divine insight and personal vice. One of the prophets' sins was their inordinate greed. Micah says, "They bite with their teeth, and cry peace, and whoever does not put into their mouths, against him do they declare war."[1] Ezekiel makes the same charge against female prophets.[2] If there could be any doubt about the understanding of his homely figure, Micah removes all question by saying plainly, "The prophets divine for money."[3] Ezekiel says that the prophets have conspired together, and the object of the conspiracy is clear: "they devour men; they take treasure and wealth; they make her widows many."[4]

Isaiah looks out with divinely given insight chiefly upon the conditions in Judah and Jerusalem, but his broad vision is too wide to be narrowly restricted in its range, and he adds pictures of conditions in the north. One of the gross vices of Samaria is drunkenness. It is not merely the poor labouring man who is addicted to this vice; for "these also reel with wine, and stagger with strong drink; the priest and the prophet reel with strong drink, they are swallowed up of wine, they stagger with strong drink; they reel in the vision, they totter in giving decisions."[5] These unworthy ministers of God are not even sober when performing the duties of their sacred offices. The prophet shows further the disgusting spectacle of

[1] Micah iii. 5. [2] Ezek. xiii. 17 ff. [3] Micah iii. 11.
[4] Ezek. xxii. 25. [5] Isa. xxviii. 7.

their orgies: "all tables are full of vomit and filthiness, so that there is no place clean."[1]

One vice begets another. The low conception of their sacred office placed these prophets in embarrassing positions. But they were true to their base standard. One of the commonest sins charged against them is one of the blackest, lying. Isaiah says the prophet that teacheth lies is the tail which Jahveh will ruthlessly cut off.[2] Whatever one may think about the words which, in the prophetic utterances, are attributed to God Himself, one may surely claim this much without opening distracting controversy: what the prophet ascribes directly to God is judged to be the weightiest truth. Then we shall be prepared for carefully considered words when we find this preface to Jeremiah's message: "Jahveh said unto me"; and listen to what Jahveh says: "The prophets are prophesying lies in My name . . . they prophesy unto you a lying vision . . . a thing of nought, the deceit of their own heart."[3] All lying is immoral. There are not many lies which are really very white. But some are blacker than others; and a lie told in the holy name of God is the blackest of all.

Jeremiah has more to say about the sins of these prophets than any other. The conditions in his time were such as to make the man who was filthy more filthy still. After the hopes raised by Josiah's reforms passed away, the king and court and people no longer sought righteousness and truth, but were

[1] Isa. xxviii. 8. [2] Isa. ix. 15.
[3] Jer. xiv. 14; cf. xxvii. 14–16; Ezek. xiii. 8.

ever ready to be fed on false hopes of security and peace. They asked of the prophet only that he would give them a cheerful message. There was no constraint laid upon the weak prophets by the great power of public opinion. Anything would be forgiven except speaking the truth to people who would not hear. The sins we have mentioned, many and serious as they are, do not exhaust the catalogue. "In the prophets of Jerusalem I have seen a horrible thing: they commit adultery, and walk in lies: and they strengthen the hands of evil-doers so that none returns from his wickedness."[1] This faithful yet persecuted prophet does not always shelter himself behind general statements. He makes this specific charge against Zedekiah and Ahab, two captive prophets in Babylon, who were doing great harm by their lies: "They have wrought folly in Israel, and they have committed adultery with their neighbours' wives, and have spoken words in My name falsely."[2] His opinion of these prophets, and his advice about them, are gathered up in a sentence: "For every man that is mad, and maketh himself a prophet, thou shouldst put them in the stocks and in shackles."[3]

In the period of the exile and of the restoration we hear comparatively little of the sons of the prophets. Schultz says the prophetic guilds had ceased already in the Assyrian age;[4] but in this I am sure the learned author is greatly mistaken. There is enough to show that they were in existence

[1] Jer. xxiii. 14.
[2] Jer. xxix. 23.
[3] Jer. xxix. 26.
[4] *O. T. Theol.*, i. 221.

still, and that the leopard had not changed his spots. In a part of the book of Zechariah, which probably belongs to a date about 300 B.C.,[1] we have a fine Messianic passage giving a picture of the new golden age. The chief marks of that day will be the total extinction of the many causes of Israel's degradation. Idols will be swept away, but that will not remove the greatest evils. Jahveh's work will be unsparing: "The prophets and the unclean spirit I will drive out of the land."[2] No one else is so severe as this unknown prophet from the late days of Israel. The time will come, he says, when if any man venture to prophesy,[3] even his father and mother will put him to death. A man would boast then, as Amos did, of being a humble labourer rather than a prophet.[4] This passage shows the odium which had come to be attached to an order which, in its best day, never reached anything very high, and at its lowest sank into the deepest pits. G. A. Smith says strongly but truly, "The prophets had become mere professional and mercenary oracle-mongers abjured to the point of death by their own ashamed and weary relatives."[5] Though no prophets are named in the catalogue of returning exiles, there were prophets at Jerusalem in the time of Nehemiah.[6]

[1] G. A. Smith, *Book of the Twelve Prophets*, ii. 401.

[2] Zech. xiii. 2. Toy says, "The writer feels himself to be apart from the prophetic herd, whose inspiration he connects with an unclean spirit" (*Judaism and Christianity*, p. 54). Yet Toy seems to make no real distinction between the writer and the prophets he denounces.

[3] Manifestly he did not mean such prophesying as he himself was doing.

[4] Zech. xiii. 3 ff.

[5] *Twelve Prophets*, ii. 484.

[6] Neh. vi. 14.

What the governor says about them shows that they were the same kind as those denounced in Zechariah.

Of the functions of these prophets very little needs to be added. Originally they seem to have been attendants of their chief, probably going through their exciting exercises to induce the ecstatic state. Elisha calls for a minstrel,[1] apparently because such a body was not with the invading armies. They were sent out on special missions by their chief.[2] In very few cases did they act on their own initiative. One of them disguised himself to rebuke Ahab for letting his chance slip to end the Syrian wars when Ben-hadad was in his power.[3] It is true that Josephus identifies this prophet with Micaiah the son of Imlah;[4] and Patrick, in Hastings' *Bible Dictionary*, pronounces this identification not unlikely. It has not a shred of evidence to stand upon.

As time went on it was natural that they should exercise more and more the general functions of a true prophet, especially when they were cut off from the leadership of great men, and made subservient to the royal will. A similar thing happened in the early Apostolic Church. Deacons were appointed to serve tables, that the greater Apostles might be set free to preach the Gospel. But as the order was broken and scattered by persecution we find, as we might expect, these deacons exercising the functions of baptising and preaching.

The numerous membership of the prophetic guilds raises the question of livelihood. Were the prophets

[1] 2 Kings iii. 15.
[2] 2 Kings iv. 29; ix. 1 ff.
[3] 1 Kings xx. 35 ff.
[4] *Antiquities*, viii. xiv. 5.

obliged to provide for themselves, or were there emoluments of office to maintain them? The information available enables us to answer these questions very definitely.

Elisha first appears plowing in his father's field.[1] As there were twelve yoke of oxen at work, his family must have had considerable means. It is not surprising, therefore, to hear of him living in his own house at Samaria;[2] and he probably provided largely for his own support. Not entirely so, however, for we read of his eating frequently at the table of the rich Shunamite, who built a special room for his accommodation.[3] So Elijah in a time of dearth was fed by a widow of Zarephath.[4] A man of Baal-shalisha brought Elisha the first-fruits for himself and the sons of the prophets who were with him.[5] This story has been preserved because of a miracle connected with it: one hundred prophets were fed on the twenty barley loaves and a few ears of corn. There were probably many other instances of gifts of food to the prophets of which we hear nothing. A large part of the living came from alms.

The prophets' fees were a considerable source of revenue. The fee paid to Samuel for telling where the lost asses were,[6] shows the general custom of paying the seers for their services. Balak's messengers carried a fee to Balaam.[7] Naaman expected to make a handsome payment for the cure of his

[1] 1 Kings xix. 19. [2] 2 Kings vi. 32. [3] 2 Kings iv. 8, 10.
[4] 1 Kings xvii. 8 ff. [5] 2 Kings iv. 42 ff.
[6] 1 Sam. ix. 8; one-fourth of a silver shekel, about sixteen cents.
[7] Num. xxii. 7.

leprosy.[1] Gehazi, the servant of Elisha, evidently thought his master reckless in throwing away such an opportunity, and he tried to replenish the treasury secretly. The Syrian understood the plea that unexpected visitors who were prophets made an imperative demand. A gift for a prophet was plainly a common thing. When Ben-hadad sent Hazael to consult Elisha, he naturally directed him to take a fee in his hand.[2] There is no intimation that the prophet declined the very large payment.

The rapacity of the prophets increased in the course of time. Micah refers to their habit of waging war on those who did not provide them with food.[3] Ezekiel finds both men and women guilty of a similar fault.[4] The second Isaiah finds the same condition in his time.[5] These prophets had apparently reached the conclusion that the world owed them a living. Schultz sees in these cases evidence that "some took to prophesying just for the sake of a livelihood."[6] The mercenary spirit did not die out until the order became extinct. Nehemiah discovered that God had not sent Shemaiah with a prophetic warning, but that the prophet had been hired by Tobiah and Sanballat to utter in the name of God a message which his employers furnished.[7] This custom of taking fees was doubtless rejected by the great prophets, as Cheyne suggests,[8] because it had become an abuse. But in the earlier days it was

[1] 2 Kings v. 15.
[2] 2 Kings viii. 8.
[3] Micah iii. 5, 11.
[4] Ezek. xiii. 19; xxii. 25.
[5] Isa. lvi. 10 f.
[6] *O. T. Theol.*, i. 261.
[7] Neh. vi. 12.
[8] *Commentary on Isaiah*, ii. 68.

expected that a prophet should obtain his living by his office; so Amaziah tells Amos "to flee to Judah and there eat bread and there prophesy."[1]

We are told of a large company of prophets who were fed at Jezebel's table.[2] These were Syrian prophets imported by the queen, who would have fared ill if left to the support of the people. It can scarcely be doubtful, however, that the company of prophets who were ever ready to utter oracles in harmony with Ahab's will were supported by the royal bounty. They respected the hand that fed them. Obadiah, Ahab's house-steward, fed one hundred prophets while they were hiding in a cave at a time of persecution.

The prophets were not always amply furnished with the necessaries of life. The widow of one of them comes to Elisha in great distress.[3] When the guild needed larger quarters they were obliged to build it with their own hands, even being constrained to borrow the necessary tools.[4] At a period of famine the sons of the prophets went out to gather herbs that they might have food.[5] Schultz quotes this passage as proof that the prophets engaged in agriculture;[6] it is rather proof of their ignorance of rural arts, as one of them unwittingly gathered poisoned herbs, and put them in the boiling pot, and so nearly killed the whole band.

To sum up in a word. The maintenance of the

[1] Amos vii. 12; that is, Amos was to eat the bread earned by his exercise of the prophetic office. Amos tells with satisfaction that he had maintained himself by tending the herd and dressing trees.

[2] 1 Kings xviii. 19. [3] 2 Kings iv. 1. [4] 2 Kings vi. 1 ff.

[5] 2 Kings iv. 38 ff. [6] *O. T. Theol.*, i. 241 f.

prophets came from their private means and personal efforts; from the royal bounty; from fees for counsel; and from the alms of the people. On the whole, the last two sources were those upon which they chiefly relied. The dependence of these prophets was undoubtedly one of the causes of their degradation. They looked for support to the people for whom they prophesied. People will pay for good news, not for bad. Naaman was carrying his fee back to Syria when he left Elisha in indignation. After he was cured of his leprosy he went back to the prophet eager to bestow a rich reward. The great prophets did not receive fees, and so far as we know were not supported by the people in any way. Their independence enabled them to stick to the truth without undue temptation. Jeremiah, we know, was a man of such ample means that he was able to buy land and pay cash for it.[1]

It remains to say a few words about the dress of the prophets. The kindred order of the Nazirites wore their hair long, perhaps as a special mark of their order. The priests wore a distinctive dress. Did the sons of the prophets have any outward mark by which they could be distinguished? Our information is slight, and yet considerable light may be drawn from it. It seems to have been the custom of the higher prophets to wear a peculiar mantle as a sign of their office. When the witch of En-dor described Samuel she said, "An old man cometh up; and he is covered with a robe."[2] This was enough to enable Saul to recognise Samuel, without mention

[1] Jer. xxxii. 9. [2] 1 Sam. xxviii. 14.

of the rent made in the robe by his own hands.[1] This was probably an unusually large garment in which a man could completely wrap himself.[2] When Ahijah went out to meet Jeroboam he was clad in a new garment. The rending of the prophetic mantle was symbolic of the rending of the kingdom from Rehoboam, as the rending of Samuel's had been before.[3] Elijah wore a similar mantle. When Ahab learns that the person met by his messengers was "a man with a garment of hair, and girt with a girdle of leather about his loins," he said at once, "It is Elijah the Tishbite."[4] Elijah was commanded to anoint Elisha as his successor in the prophetic office. To execute this order he cast his mantle upon Elisha as the latter was plowing in the field; for to be clothed with the prophetic robe was to be called to the prophetic office; and Elisha readily recognised the significance of this act.[5] The prophetic vestment was a symbol of the prophet's miraculous powers.

Elijah used his mantle to clear a way through the waters of the Jordan,[6] and his successor, to whom the mantle had fallen, used it in the same way.[7] Before Elisha put on the garment of his predecessor we are told that "he seized his garments and tore them into two pieces."[8] From this statement we are told in Hastings' *Bible Dictionary*, i. 693, that Elisha wore the clothing common to other men. The fact seems

[1] 1 Sam. xv. 27.

[2] In spite of this statement, Kraetzschmar, who holds that Samuel was a *seer*, and not a *nabi*, contends that the seers did not wear the prophetic mantle.

[3] 1 Kings xi. 29 f; cf. 1 Sam. xv. 27 f.

[4] 2 Kings i. 8.

[5] 1 Kings xix. 16 ff.

[6] 2 Kings ii. 8.

[7] 2 Kings ii. 14.

[8] 2 Kings ii. 12.

to be that he tore off his own garment[1] and discarded it,[2] that he might put on the robe of Elijah, and so appear in the garb of the great leader.

The peculiar garment had become a mark of the prophet's position. When Isaiah was commanded to loose the sackcloth from his loins, and assume the scanty garb of a captive,[3] the sackcloth is the hairy garment of the prophet. In the work of destruction all ranks would be reduced to slavery. The girdle which Jeremiah wore, whose rotting by the Euphrates is a symbolic prophecy, implies that he too wore the large prophetic mantle which was fastened at the waist by a girdle.[4] John Baptist was clothed as a prophet, wearing the raiment of camel's hair fastened at the loins by a leather girdle.[5]

Jastrow, in his interesting article on "The Tearing of Garments as a Symbol of Mourning,"[6] holds a very different notion of the prophet's dress. He says, "The example of Saul shows that stripping off the garments was an act preliminary to prophesying, and hence even at a later age the prophet's garb is characterised as more primitive than the ordinary fashions of the day. It is clearly because prophesying is a religious act that nakedness is associated with it."[7] And again, "From the passage Isaiah xx. 2–4, it appears that the prophet's ordinary clothes consisted merely of a loin-cloth and sandals, and from

[1] This is not excluded by the fact that the rending of the garment was a mark of sorrow.

[2] Jastrow argues that the language here used means a tearing of the garments off the body (*J.A.O.S.*, xxi. 24).

[3] Isa. xx. 2. [4] Jer. xiv. [5] Matt. iii. 4; Mark i. 6.

[6] *J.A.O.S.*, xxi. 23 ff. [7] *Ib.*, p. 35.

other testimony we know that the dress of the seers was of a much simpler character than that worn by other persons."[1]

I cannot follow Jastrow's reasoning. As the prophet became heated in his frenzy, he would naturally cast aside his large outer garment, just as the countryman may throw off his coat to dance. I agree with Cheyne that "sackcloth" in Isaiah xx. 2 refers to the haircloth which the prophets adopted as their habitual dress. The expression to gird sackcloth implies that it was worn as an outer garment. It is good Hebrew usage to call one "naked" who had laid aside the outer garment. Jastrow is carried away by his thesis that in religious practices there is a tendency to revert to the primitive customs.

Kraetzschmar holds that the *nebi'im* wore the hairy mantle, but that the seers (*ro'im*) had no distinctive dress. He draws too sharp a line between the seers and the prophets. The statement in 2 Samuel xxiv. 11, "the prophet Gad, David's seer," would imply that the former term denoted the general office, and the latter the particular function, as we might say "the priest A. B., rector of St. James' Church."

Did the sons of the prophets also wear a distinctive dress? From our meagre information and from the probabilities of the case, we infer that they did.[2] A New Testament writer expresses the accepted Jewish idea when he says that the prophets "went about in sheepskins, in goatskins."[3] When one of these went

[1] *Ib.*, p. 31.

[2] The dervishes still wear a cloak of camel's hair (Stanley, *Sinai and Pal.*, p. 381).

[3] Heb. xi. 37.

out to meet Ahab he "disguised himself with a covering over his eyes."[1] As soon as the covering was removed the king "recognised him that he was one of the prophets."[2] This cannot mean that the king recognised his face because of personal acquaintance; the statement is explicit that Ahab perceived that he was one of the prophets. Some mark of a prophet had been covered to effect a disguise.[3] The disguise may have been partly effected by laying aside the prophetic cloak. Whatever may have been the case when the members of this order occupied a humble and subordinate place, it is more than probable that they clothed themselves in the peculiar prophetic dress when they assumed the complete prophetic functions. In Zechariah we are told that in the new era "the prophets shall be ashamed of their vision; neither shall they wear a hairy mantle to deceive."[4] It is probable that in Zechariah xi. 3, we should read "their [the shepherds'] prophetic garment is destroyed" for "their glory is spoiled," the howling shepherds being no other than these useless prophets. It seems to be highly probable that this dress was common to all prophets, and was universally regarded as a mark of their office, just as now the cassock vest is a garment peculiar to the clergy.

[1] 1 Kings xx. 38. [2] 1 Kings xx. 41.

[3] Kittel argues from this passage that the prophets were recognisable by some mark on the face, in the region of the eyes. Kraetzschmar holds that the prophets wore a hairy mantle and also made scars in their foreheads, after the manner of the Beduin tribes. To disguise himself this prophet simply covered his face with a cloth in order to conceal the scars. This view affords a good explanation of this passage, but lacks other support in O.T. See additional note (6).

[4] Zech. xiii. 4.

CHAPTER V

THE PROPHET'S CALL

NOTHING is more striking in the phenomena of prophecy than the absolute confidence with which the message is spoken. The reason of this is not far to seek, for the Holy Ghost spoke by the prophets. If the prophet were expressing merely his own opinions, the positiveness of his tone would not be altogether inexplicable. Any man who has deep convictions is apt to speak them with a confidence bordering on assurance. But the peculiarly strong confidence of the prophet had a different and deeper basis. He was, indeed, a man of strong convictions, but above that he was fully persuaded that he spoke the mind of his God. Consequently there is no doubt, no hesitation, no uncertainty. He is authorised to preface his message with the formula "Thus saith the Lord," and therefore feels that his words cannot be gainsaid.

It was not given to every Hebrew to know or to declare the will of God. The ability and right to do that was the direct gift of God Himself. He selected out of the mass of men those to whom His purposes were so revealed that they spoke with conviction and authority. In other words, the prophet believed himself to be divinely called to his office. He held

that without that call no one had a right to exercise the prophetic function. Those who did so otherwise were mere pretenders or visionaries who spoke the vanity of their own hearts. Sometimes, indeed, the true prophets were unwilling to believe that any man could say insincerely "thus saith the Lord." Yet they knew the message so introduced to be false and misleading. The only explanation was that God Himself had deceived the prophet.[1] Sometimes the error of the seers is attributed to the inspiration of false gods.[2]

The most certainly genuine call, however, could have evidential value chiefly for the one who experienced it. In the usual tests of prophecy, as we shall see in a subsequent chapter,[3] the call has no place. For it is a personal experience, and its nature varies with the personality. It is therefore impossible to set up a standard by which its genuineness can be predetermined. This rule applies to modern as well as ancient prophets; hence no minister should ever be asked for evidence of his call other than may be read in his ministry; and no Christian should ever be asked to expose his deepest spiritual experiences to a curious audience.

Yet the Hebrew prophets have generally themselves told the story of their call. There is, however, a vast difference between a voluntary revelation of a deep personal experience for the sake of one's fellows, and an enforced exposure which could have no proper meaning to one's auditors, for they sit as

[1] See, for example, 1 Kings xxii. 22; Ezek. xiv. 9.
[2] Jer. ii. 8.
[3] See chap. vi.

judges rather than as disciples. The prophet would have scorned to betray the secret of his soul before a body sitting to pass judgment on the genuineness of his vision. God had spoken to him, and should any mortal pretend to control one who had heard the Divine voice? But when in the course of his ministry, the story of his call could lend weight to his words, and so persuade those who were doubtful of God's revelation, then the prophet would not hold back even the dearest secret of his heart.

Such autobiographical revelations should be read with reverence and sympathy. We may study them for our profit, but not to satisfy an idle curiosity May God give us the humble spirit of a learner as we venture to seek the explanation of those scenes in which the Divine voice called to their office the holy men of old!

How shall we pursue this investigation, the difficulty of which is patent? The surest way is to take a few instances and study them inductively. We shall attain the clearest conception of the call by a study of concrete cases. From this study we shall be able to gather the broad principles in a brief summary.

There will be no danger of mistake if we begin with the first of the great prophets, the herdman of Tekoa. Of the early life of the prophets before Amos we know little, and cannot always tell how they were led to their sacred office.[1] They either

[1] Samuel, like Moses, is said to have been called directly; Elisha was summoned by the prophet he was to succeed, though it is said that Elijah was divinely commanded to appoint Elisha his successor.

found no occasion to relate personal history; or as they did not themselves write, the story was not preserved by those who have given us such meagre biographical information as we have. Of the sons of the prophets nothing is to be said, because their call consisted in admission to an order. They were not looked to for high service, nor regarded by posterity as channels of revelation. They were probably received into the order by the father, or chief, and had no such direct Divine summons to office as had those great men who really contributed to the knowledge of God.

Amos reveals something of his call upon two different occasions. One of his allusions throws light upon the other, and though less significant as a source of information, must nevertheless be carefully considered. The call of Amos is particularly interesting, because he was not summoned to a lifelong service, but only to the delivery of a special message. All that we know of his prophetic career occupies but a few days. It is, of course, not impossible that Amos may have been known as a seer to his fellows at Tekoa even while he was a herdman; but it is highly improbable.[1]

By a variety of figures Amos prepares the way for the account of his personal revelation. There is nothing accidental in his leaving his flock in the wilderness of Judah to prophesy in Bethel. If two persons walk together, it is obvious that they meet

[1] Kraetzschmar says, however, "It was not for the first time that Amos had in this way appeared openly, but heretofore he had been let alone" (*Prophet und Seher im alten Israel*, p. 1).

by appointment. If the lion roars, it is plain that he has taken his prey. If a bird is snared, it is evident that someone has set a trap. If a trumpet is blown as an alarm of war, it is not necessary to hunt further for the cause of the people's terror. If a man prophesies in the name of Jahveh, the inference is plain that Jahveh has spoken to him.[1] No man can truly preach unless the word has been given him from his God. On the other hand, if God has spoken to a human soul, and revealed things which vitally concern the weal or woe of the nation, it is impossible for that man to hold his peace. As Emerson put it, "the seer must be a sayer." Amos only began to speak when silence was no longer possible.

Amos speaks more distinctly, however, when Amaziah interrupts his preaching, and bids him go back to Judah, if he must needs prophesy, for Bethel was a royal sanctuary, and the king would not permit such heavy words to be declaimed there. Then Amos tells the priest that he is not prophesying because prophecy is his trade and he must needs exercise it; on the contrary, he was a herdman and dresser of sycamore trees; but Jahveh took him from the flock and bade him prophesy. Nor was it a roving commission which was entrusted to him. Jahveh said, "Go, prophesy unto My people Israel."[2] That command could not be obeyed by exercising the office of a seer among the villagers of Tekoa, nor by adopting the priest's suggestion to prophesy in Judah. The Divine commission made Israel his

[1] Amos iii. 3–8. [2] Amos vii. 15.

objective, and it was to Israel that Amos spoke, and would continue to speak, in spite of the power of both priest and king.

The prophet's declaration, superficially considered, is simple enough. God directed him to prophesy to Israel, and he did as he was bid. But must we be content with the statement which lies on the surface? May we not seek to penetrate further into the mystery, so that we may more fully comprehend the prophet's call to his great mission?

We believe still in the Divine call. More than ever before are we convinced that every true life is a vocation. The physician is divinely called to lengthen and ease the physical life; the lawyer, the merchant, the manufacturer, the writer, the carpenter, and the shoemaker, if they be true men, are appointed of God to their several callings. Especially is woman called of God, whether, as is so common in these days, she stands as the competitor of man in nearly every occupation of life, or whether she fills her old and highest place as the light of a home, and the bearer and best counsellor of children. We believe also that men are called to be prophets to-day as well as in the time of Jeroboam II.; and sometimes we think the voice of the true prophet was never more urgently needed. Was the call of Amos different in kind from all these other calls, or at most only in a degree? Did God once give men a specific summons infinitely clearer than any man knows to-day? Were the prophets of old absolutely safeguarded against mistaking their vocation, while men of to-day are honestly doubtful whether the

"P. C.," which a man said he saw in a vision, stands for "preach Christ" or "plow corn"? Or can those ancient calls be only rightly explained in terms of modern thought?

A man to-day, however conscientious and devout, may be in the gravest doubt of the nature of his call. A young man thinks of the ministry and various other occupations. He desires to live an upright and a useful life. He is ready to become a minister, a merchant, or a blacksmith, if he can be assured that his mission is surely one or another. He is persuaded that no office is low if it comes by Divine appointment; but how can he be sure what is God's purpose for him? He may have a decided preference for a certain calling; but can he be sure that his preference is also God's? Or a young minister may be equipped for his career, and in most heartbreaking uncertainty where to prophesy. He is offered many places by men: the rector of a city parish offers him an assistantship; a vestry elects him to a rectorate; he is urged to go to the mission field. He knows that in any of these places opportunity will not be lacking for any talent he may possess; he is ready not to choose, but to be chosen. Among the discrepant calls of men, where is he to find the Divine voice, which never gives a roving commission, and which never perplexes by sending two calls at once? In such cases we cannot depend upon hearing the objective voice of God, telling us to go prophesy to Israel. It seems, therefore, as if the Hebrew prophets had a great advantage over their poor modern successors. But was it really so? Did they hear

a voice which is no longer audible even to the most devoutly inclined ear? Or were they constrained to undergo the same confusing experience as ourselves, and leave us the record not of the grave problem, but only of its clear and final solution?

Amos was absolutely convinced that he was called of God to prophesy to Israel. Nothing could have shaken his faith in his vocation. We do certainly believe that he was not mistaken. However strange the course of our interpretation of this call may seem, we wish to keep this as our guiding principle: Amos was really called of God.

Yet we shall fail to reach the psychological explanation of that call if we do not bear in mind the fact that we are dealing with a foreign people and a distant time. The religious language of the eighth century before Christ is not the same as the religious language of the twentieth century after Christ; and the Hebrews did not speak the English tongue, nor did they think English thoughts. To understand the facts of the earlier life of the Orientals we must translate their speech into the language of the later life of the Occidentals. The failure to do that has led to confusion and error in the past, and will do so again in the present unless we are on our guard.

As I have before intimated, Amos gives us a hint, in Oriental language, indeed, which may lead us to understand the truth. He said he must prophesy because God had spoken; in plain terms, he means that he perceived a condition of things to which his Israelite neighbours were blind. This herdman was a man quite beyond the ordinary. He had eyes to

see, and he saw. His contemporaries were rejoicing in a peaceful period, and were quite blind to the political movements which indicated that the present happy situation could not last long. Amos beheld a nation revelling riotously in a prosperous day, and laying up no stores against the troubled night which was pressing near. The insight was the call of God; God showed him the true condition: that disclosure was a command to warn those who were in peril.

The herdman was, moreover, deeply religious and conspicuously moral. He had watched the course of the world's history and had reflected upon God's government. He was persuaded that all the world-movements were in the hands of Jahveh. He rose above his times in that conception. Jahveh had, indeed, brought Israel out of Egypt, but His part in the great movements did not stop with that. Logically it could not stop with that, and Amos was as relentless in following conclusions to their end as Calvin. If Jahveh could bring a nation from Egypt, He was more than a mere national God; for that fact presupposes a control of Egypt as well as of Israel. Therefore it was His hand also that brought the Philistines from Caphtor, and the Syrians from Kir. And it was His hand that would bring the Assyrians upon Israel.

There was another great idea which God breathed into the soul of this Tekoan seer: the basis of the Divine judgments was ethical, not racial. This simple herdman rose entirely above the notion, so common even in much later ages, that God looked toward His

people as a parent looks who is blinded by blood-relationship, and so will defend an abandoned son in his wantonness. The people might still believe that Jahveh would protect His own, and fight their battles against any foreign people, whether Israel was faithful or not. Amos had no such idea. Damascus would be punished because of its barbarous cruelty, Gaza because of its indulgence in an inhuman slave trade, and other nations for similar offences against sound morality. Israel also was steeped in wrong. This people had sold the righteous for silver and the needy for a pair of shoes; they had made the Nazirites drunk in violation of their vows; they had silenced the voice of those who were ordained of God to speak. Punishment was just as certain for Israel as for Damascus, aye, more certain; for their superior relation to Jahveh, and greater knowledge of His holy ways, aggravated their offence. Damascus might plead ignorance, but Israel had sinned against the light.

This, then, in a word, is the picture seen by the keen eye of the prophet of Tekoa: a nation steeped in all manner of vice, utterly disregardful of the sword hanging over their head, and not a voice raised to show them their peril, and so to turn them from their sin. Amos saw all this plainly. Many a day must he have reflected upon the unhappy condition of Israel Could not a voice sound the alarm so that the nation would turn from their sin? There was no such voice in all the nation. What the people were doing to avert the Divine punishment was useless. They were attempting to pacify a God inflamed by

righteous wrath with sacrifices and sacred song. They offered bullocks in place of obedience, the fat of rams in place of hearkening. This seer could hear the cry from Heaven, "Take thou away from Me the noise of thy songs . . . and let justice roll down as waters, and righteousness as a mighty stream." [1]

What a moment it must have been to Amos when the question first forced its way to recognition: "Why do *you* not warn Israel?" It was easy for him to object: "I am no prophet, or prophet's son; I have no commission to speak in God's name." But the rejoinder was inevitable: "Your assumed impediment is really an important qualification. The members of the prophetic order are at a disadvantage. They do not see as you do, because they look too much with professional eyes. They are bound up with the State, so that frankness would lead to a persecution which they are not strong enough to face. You are free and brave, and you understand."

Over and over again, by day and by night, such thoughts must have troubled the soul of the seer, until the truth flashed upon him which ended inward discussion and led to obedient action. He came to see that just as Jahveh leads a nation from Egypt, or sends the Assyrians to chastise Damascus, so was the Divine voice calling him to preach. The difficulties and dangers were as plain as before; but they no longer constituted an obstacle. The prophet perceived that when God gives a man insight, the gift is not for selfish enjoyment, but for use. In his clear perception of the perilous situation and sore need of

[1] Amos v. 23 f.

Israel, he saw the call of God: "Jahveh God hath spoken; who can but prophesy?"[1]

Such an interpretation of Amos's call as I have given may still be unwelcome to some, because, as it seems to them, it is one of the countless ways in which modern critics are taking the supernatural out of the Bible. I must say frankly that in this study I am searching primarily for truth, and not for welcome truth, or harmless truth, or truth qualified in any way whatsoever. Truth ought always to be welcome; it certainly is not only harmless, but is the most helpful of all things. Yet I should be quite devoid of a sympathetic spirit if I did not desire so to present what I believe to be true that my presentation shall edify faith rather than destroy it.

That God should pronounce in objective audible words in the Hebrew tongue, "Go prophesy to Israel," is regarded as supernatural. There is an element of the miraculous in it, and it is an apologetic support for faith. That God should have inspired Amos in some such way as I have indicated is natural, and therefore apologetically worthless. The prophet becomes only an enlightened man, and

[1] Amos iii. 8. Wellhausen gives an entirely different turn to this passage. He emends the text and interprets thus: "The Lord Jahveh speaks (through the prophets); who shall not tremble?" (*Die kleinen Propheten*, p. 75.) I can only say here that there is no warrant for the emendation except that it completes a parallelism; and that I agree with G. A. Smith that thus to alter the text is "to blunt the point of the argument." Amos at this point is referring to the voice of Jahveh which he heard, not what the people heard. Wellhausen is influenced by his desire to establish the fact that the word of Jahveh and the message of the prophets are not distinguishable. His text is followed by Nowack, but rejected by Marti.

down he tumbles from the high pedestal upon which a portion of the Protestant world has placed him. But facts are stubborn things. In the one case there is consistency with all that we know of God's dealings with man, which is not by precept, but by inspiration. This method is likewise consistent with our highest conception of God, a Spirit guiding the world upward by spiritual influences upon souls kindred to Himself. And God is "the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever."[1]

But why did not the prophet tell us plainly what happened, instead of misleading us by doubtful words? The difficulty is with our understanding rather than with Amos's statement. I suppose that every Israelite to whom he spoke in Bethel understood exactly what the prophet meant. Those people were accustomed to the direct ascription to God of what we call natural forces. The thunder was the voice of God just as truly as the still whisper in the soul. Then again this preacher had no time and no occasion to tell the whole story of the process by which his conclusion was reached, but only to state the final truth. In conclusion, let me say, and say as strongly as possible, that the man who does not see the agency of God in the call of Amos, supposing my interpretation right, must have a faith sorely in need of props; for how otherwise can he possibly believe in the agency of God in the affairs of men to-day?

How different was the call of Hosea, a native Israelite, who put on the prophetic mantle shortly

[1] Heb. xiii. 8.

after Amos was permitted to lay it aside. God leads many men by many paths. O that men could see when God is leading, that they might follow as Amos and Hosea did! Amos was led to prophesy by reason of divinely given insight; Hosea was directed to the same task by domestic affliction of the sorest kind which can come to an upright soul.

The sad facts of Hosea's life, so far as he has disclosed them to us, are briefly these. He married a woman whom he tenderly loved. Gomer the daughter of Diblaim bore the prophet two sons and a daughter,[1] whose symbolic names[2] show that already God's hand was at work upon this choice spirit.

While these children were still young, came the heart-breaking discovery to the loving husband that his wife was unfaithful. So abandoned did she become that she left Hosea's home and indulged in riotous living with her paramours, until the inevitable end was reached by her sale into slavery.

Nothing would have been easier for Hosea than to have written a divorce, and closed his house and heart against his faithless spouse for ever. But real love cannot always be eradicated by a bill of divorce. In spite of her wantonness, Hosea loved the wife of his youth. He bought her back from the bondage into which she had fallen, and put her under restraint; if that

[1] G. A. Smith holds that Jezreel alone was Hosea's child, and that therefore Gomer's infidelity began soon after marriage. In the case of Jezreel it is said that Gomer "conceived and bore him a son" (Hosea i. 3). This "him" is lacking in the account of the birth of the other children. But the omission may be accidental, or at least not so full of meaning as Smith supposes.

[2] Jezreel, Lo-ruḥamah (uncompassionated), and Lo-'ammi (not my people); see Hosea i. 3–9.

did not turn her heart back to her husband, at least it made indulgence in her favourite vice impossible.

Space will not permit a discussion of the strife over the interpretation of this story, nor is it necessary for my purpose. The reader will find ample treatment in the recent commentaries and other books on the prophets. For myself, I can only say that I agree on the one hand with those who deem it impossible for God to demand of a keenly affectionate soul that he should take a prostitute to his bosom, and on the other hand with those who cannot be satisfied with the idea that this story is an allegory, but insist that it is the real record of the prophet's life.[1]

As I have indicated above, Gomer's unfaithfulness developed after her marriage.

The command "Go, take thee a prostitute wife"[2] is an instance common enough in prophecy, of interpreting an early experience in the light of later knowledge. It does not necessarily imply that Gomer was bad when Hosea married her, though many have held that strange view.

The explanation of the prophet's persistent efforts

[1] There are in the main three interpretations of this story. (1) That it is wholly allegorical. Hosea invents it to describe the infidelity of Israel. But as G. A. Smith says, it "would be strange for Hosea to tell such a record of his wife if false, or, if he was unmarried, about himself." (2) That it is wholly literal. God, indeed, lays heavy burdens upon His servants, but we should require greater evidence than we have to believe that He demanded that a pure man should take a foul woman to his breast. (3) That the experience is real, but to be interpreted with discretion. The main point is that Gomer was pure, or thought to be pure by Hosea, and fell into wrong after marriage. This view has rapidly gained acceptance since its convincing presentation by W. Robertson Smith in his *Prophets of Israel.*

[2] Hosea i. 2.

to reclaim his fallen wife, and the proof that she had been a pure bride, are to be found in his inextinguishable love for her. Hosea might have taken a prostitute to wife at the Divine command, but no power in earth or heaven could have kindled such a love as he felt for Gomer, if the object of it had been already a fallen woman. Love in many cases proves unable to endure any very great strain. A father loves a son until the boy goes badly astray, and then the once fond parent turns him out of doors without compunction. A man and woman really seem to be a loving pair during courtship and honeymoon. Soon afterwards they may face each other in a divorce court with the most implacable hatred. But there are some natures in which love takes a deeper root, and can never be eradicated. A mother often tenderly loves a son who breaks her heart. A wife may continue to love a man, in spite of everything on his part to destroy her affection. Such a love as Hosea's is beyond question uncommon, but is by no means so impossible a feat as to be explicable only as fiction.

What has this essay on love to do with Hosea's call? Much every way. Hosea must have struggled many a time with those troublesome questions which arise in afflicted souls: Why does my God whom I devotedly serve suffer my lot to be so rough? Why is my heart, so full of a pure passion, denied a worthy object? Why am I unable to tear out this passion from my soul, and allow the profligate to meet the doom she so richly deserves?

Then some day the explanation came to Hosea with the fearful force with which great truths break

into human souls. This hard life of mine is history in miniature of God's relation to this nation. Jahveh loved Israel in her youth, and brought her from Egypt to be His own people. How sadly Israel has requited this love. She has played the harlot with Baals, and has fallen into every manner of sin. Will Jahveh cast her off as utterly abandoned and worthless, and let her meet her just doom? No; Jahveh will punish His unfaithful spouse, but He loves her in spite of her infidelity, and will reclaim her, and take her back purified into His bosom.[1]

Having grasped that truth, it is easy to see that he must preach it to the people. "Jahveh hath spoken; who can but prophesy?" The burden of Hosea's message is drawn from his own unhappy life. The very bitterness of his own estate opened his eyes to the great facts about God and Israel. If only Gomer could see the matter as Hosea saw it! If only Israel could see the matter as God saw it! Hosea sees it as God sees it, and God's mission for him is to make Israel's eyes like his own.

In the opening of his eyes he discovers the providence in his own affairs. The prophet looks back upon his life, which had first explained a portion of God's life, and now in the light of that truth about God he understands what before had been so mysterious in his own sufferings. In realising God's

[1] Long afterward a prophet greater than Hosea draws a brief picture of Jahveh's patient endurance of His unfaithful bride. "Where is the bill of your mother's divorcement, wherewith I have put her away?" (Isa. l. 1). This implies, of course, that Jahveh had not put her away. The unknown prophet of the exile evidently was familiar with Hosea.

pain he came to understand his own. God had used his afflictions to open his eyes. The rod was laid upon his back, that out of his very pain should come the inspiration to a life and work in harmony with the plans of God.[1] God had called Hosea to prophesy, as He calls all men, from the day of his birth; but the prophet did not hear the call at first. He had other purposes in life. He married and begot children, and started at least in his own way. The prophetic office in the time of Hosea had even less attraction for an ambitious and capable man than the ministry has in our day. But God's voice is not always silenced with a first refusal. The child Samuel may at first mistake the voice of God for that of Eli; but every time he lies down to resume his broken sleep the voice sounds again, and will sound until it is answered, or an answer made impossible. So the call was ever pressing upon the heart of Hosea, and when personal misery brought him low, in the quiet reflection which comes with great sorrow, the voice was heard and heeded.

God's hand reaches out for all kinds of men. Elisha was taken from the plow, Amos from the herd, Jeremiah and Ezekiel from the priesthood, Matthew from the tax office, the sons of Zebedee from the fishing boats, Zephaniah probably from the royal palace.[2] But among them all, high and low,

[1] In Hosea i. 2 we read: "The beginning of Jahveh's speaking by Hosea: Jahveh said to Hosea, Go, take to thee a prostitute wife." In the light of his bitter experience the prophet sees that the whole course of his life was providentially leading to the present climax.

[2] Zephaniah was probably the great-great-grandson of King Hezekiah (see Zeph. i. 1, and A. B. Davidson in Camb. Bible).

God never laid His hand upon a more accomplished man than Isaiah the son of Amoz.

Isaiah appears to have been highly educated, like St. Paul; but his training was not so narrow and partisan as Paul's. He was a man of such diversified talents that education was inevitable. Wherever there is a genuine thirst for knowledge, means to satisfy it are certain to be found. God selects choice spirits for His greatest service, even though they are often found in humble stations. God looks at the heart and requires fitness for the task in hand. At the time Uzziah died Jerusalem was a cultured city. Court and people had grown out of the crude conditions of earlier days, and had made long strides towards a high civilisation. The man who could get the ear of this people must be one whose culture and natural abilities would at once mark him as a leader among men. There was probably no one in Jerusalem who more exactly met the requirements than Isaiah the son of Amoz; and to him God's finger beckoned.

The story of his call to the prophetic office is found in the sixth chapter of his prophecies, rather than in the first, as we might expect. This order is significant. It is plain that the prophet originally had no intention of revealing that inward personal struggle, the outcome of which was his complete yielding to the Divine will. Only when the time came that the publishing of his personal relation to God might add force to the words spoken by His command was he constrained to lay bare that scene in the temple which determined finally the course of his life. We will read his story in his own words.

"In the year that king Uzziah died: at that time I saw the Lord seated upon a lofty and exalted throne, and His train filled the temple. Seraphim were standing above Him, each with six wings: with two he covered his face, with two he covered his feet, and two he used for flight. One cried to the other and said: Holy, holy, holy, is Jahveh Sabaoth: His glory fills the whole earth. The foundations of the thresholds shook with the noise of the one crying, and the house was filled with smoke.

"And I said, Woe unto me: I am undone; for I am a man unclean of lips, and dwell among a people unclean of lips, and yet my eyes have looked upon King Jahveh Sabaoth. Then one of the seraphim flew unto me, holding in his hand a hot stone which he had taken from the altar with tongs. He touched my mouth and said: Lo, this has touched thy lips, so that thy iniquity is removed and thy uncleanness is absolved.

"Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying: Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? And I spoke: Behold me, send me. And He said, Go, and say to this people, Hear with the ear, but do not comprehend, and see with the eye, but do not gain knowledge."[1]

But one might well ask us, as Philip asked the Ethiopian proselyte, "Understandest thou what thou readest?" Isaiah was an ancient Oriental, and spoke the language of his time and of his people. His thoughts were not like ours, and his way of stating things was by no means modern. From a literal

[1] Isa. vi. 1–9.

understanding of this story the conclusion has been drawn that the whole problem of Isaiah's life was raised and settled in the few moments he spent in the temple, during which he actually saw with human eye the God of Israel. But such an inference is quite unnatural, and is highly improbable.

Isaiah had seen the necessity of a voice lifted up in the cause of righteousness. Many times the thought must have forced itself upon him, that he was himself the man to whom Jahveh pointed as the fit leader in a movement to guide the State and people according to Divine principles. But there was a serious objection, the same which has been felt by every right-minded man who is called to a holy office—that is, personal unfitness. Not only did he dwell among a people whose lips were unclean, but unhappily his own were in the same condition. Whatever else it ought to be, the mouth which proclaims God's message to the world should be clean. How was he, conscious of a beam in his own eye, to have the clear vision necessary to remove the mote from his brothers' eyes?

But God's call is inexorable. Nothing more surely marks the Divine voice in a great soul than its persistence. Isaiah might have stilled the voice by absolutely disregarding and defying it. But he was a true man, of devout spirit, and was at least ready to listen. He went to the temple, as apparently was his custom when in perplexity, that he might, in that sacred place, pour out his soul to Jahveh. The hand of God pursues him in the sanctuary. As he prays he sees a vision with that inner eye which is some-

times more truthful in its sight than the outward eye. The sight of God fills him with the terror which it inspired in every Hebrew. How could sinful eyes look upon the holy God without peril? The personal disqualification which had long stood in the way of obedience is put now in the specific form of the unclean lips. God meets the objection by sending a seraph to remove the taint. The effect reaches further than the lips. The prophet's hearing also has been made acute by the purification. God needs but to touch one part and man is every whit clean.[1] Isaiah hears again the Lord calling for a volunteer: "Whom shall I send?" The obstacle which had hindered him so long has been swept away. Peace has come to the perplexed soul. Duty is clear now, and there is the impulse to follow it at any cost. "Here am I, send me." The uncertainty of weeks, and perhaps of months, is all gone. Isaiah comes from the temple with his life's work settled. However resolutely he had stood against former calls to the prophetic office, he succumbs completely now, and henceforth gives himself to the proclaiming of God's message to the world.

That this call was supernatural in the true sense of being Divine, is as unquestionable to me as it was to its object. But that its manner of operation was not essentially different from thousands of other calls is a truth too important to be lightly thrust aside. God has been calling men to His service all through the ages. Doubtless there is a personal appropriateness in the form of every call. Nevertheless God is the

[1] John xiii. 10.

same in all ages; man is man in all ages; and the Divine influence upon the soul is substantially the same. We can have no purpose to lower Isaiah's call. On the contrary, I believe the right explanation raises it. It is a greater thing that God keeps every planet in its place than that He should disarrange the system by the temporary stopping of one of them. The speaking of God to every soul that listens is vastly more supernatural, to use a too hackneyed term, than the speaking only to a soul now and then. The important thing about such a call is its reality. It is a bad condition for a man to be a blacksmith whom God calls to be a carpenter; it is much worse to be a prophet contrary to the Divine will. Isaiah's call was real. It led him to his true life, and for forty years he was the leading figure in the Jewish Church, if not in the Jewish State.

This chapter is growing apace in spite of my efforts to be brief. But room must be made for an account of the summons of one other prophet, one of the most interesting of all the men of God of the olden time, a man whose whole life was a martyrdom, who saw all his efforts apparently come to naught, who watched the State decline and then go to ruin, and who was conscious of the degradation of the popular religion—Jeremiah of Anathoth.

Jeremiah was a priest, and seemingly derived his support from the revenues of an order which he did not hesitate to expose with vigour. Whether he exercised the priestly office in his younger days we do not know. But we do know that God had more important business for him than killing animals or

laying fire upon the sacred altar. This prophet has told us of his call, and we turn first of all to his own story.

In the thirteenth year of the reign of Josiah (B.C. 626) "the word of Jahveh came to me thus: Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee, and before thou camest from the womb, I sanctified thee; a prophet to the nations I have made thee.

"Then I said, Alas, Lord Jahveh: Lo, I have no ability in speaking; for I am but a youth.

"But Jahveh said unto me, Do not say, I am but a youth: for to all that I send thee, thou shalt go; and all that I command thee thou shalt speak. Have no fear because of them: for I shall be with thee to deliver thee: utterance of Jahveh.

"Then Jahveh put forth His hand and touched my mouth; and Jahveh said unto me, Lo, I have put My words in thy mouth. See, I have appointed thee this day over the nations and over the kingdoms, to pluck up and to destroy, to tear down and to root out, to build and to plant."[1]

We find here unusually full information about the young priest's struggle before he was willing to lay aside the ephod for the hairy mantle. Jeremiah was as much a fatalist as the average Oriental. God's summons to him was no sudden impulse. Before he was born he was destined of Jahveh to this high but dangerous office. The young priest seemed to feel the hand of destiny upon him, but the present impulse to begin prophesying seemed to him premature. He was but a youth, which may mean that he

[1] Jer. i. 4–10.

was still too young, or that he as yet had risen to but a subordinate position in the priestly order; or it may very likely include both objections. When he attains riper years and has reached a more prominent position in his order, then he can begin more auspiciously the almost impossible task assigned to him.

That objection would have validity if God sent a prophet into the world, and then abandoned him to his fate, as He was once supposed to have created a world, and, when it was once set going, had withdrawn His hand for ever. But the prophet's connexion with God was constant. God's words would ever be placed in his mouth, and he had but to let them come out. Such statements as this have been misunderstood by men unconscious of the Oriental manner of speech, and who have taken the words too literally. Interpreted in that way they lay a fine foundation for a strict doctrine of verbal inspiration.

But we have no ground to take them in that way. Jeremiah himself has supplied the corrective for that slavish literalism. Years later he compares the message of God to a fire in his bones. He had reached the determination to quit his unwelcome office with its dreary messages of woe. It was easy to form that resolution, but it was not so easy to extinguish that fire in the bones, that is, the Divine impulse to speak out the truth bravely, whether the truth would kindle hope or plunge into despair.

Jeremiah's call is not limited to the kingdom of Judah. On the contrary, he is established as a prophet to the nations and kingdoms of the world. In his day the truth was well established that Jahveh

was no mere national God. The whole world was subject to His will. The prophet could have no narrower interest than his God; therefore while primarily concerned with the fate of his own people, Jeremiah's interest was world-wide.

Jeremiah had been born in the reign of Manasseh. In those days the man who prophesied took his life in his hand. The soldier's office was less hazardous than the prophet's, for the soldier's enemies were all in his front. Conditions became more peaceful under the youthful Josiah, but Jeremiah knew that Josiah could not live for ever, and the story of his call appears not to have been written till its author had experienced the bitterness of persecution, and thus his account is influenced by his later hardships. Jahveh guaranteed not only that Jeremiah should never lack a true message,[1] but also that he should not want efficient protection. However severe the antagonism to the truth should become, the Divine hand retains its power, and will not fail him at the crises.

Finally, Jeremiah is warned in advance that the character of his ministry will be destructive. The constructive process would not be entirely overlooked, and yet we find four strong words of destruction and but two of construction.[2] This indicates

[1] Cheyne interprets the statement "I have put My words in thy mouth" thus: "I promise never to leave thee in uncertainty as to thy message; I will guide and overrule the natural promptings of thy heart and intellect as that thou shalt convey the only true conception of My will which the language can express or the people of Israel comprehend" (*Jeremiah, his Life and Times*, p. 5).

[2] "To pluck up and to destroy, to tear down and to root out, to build and to plant" (i. 10).

correctly the kind of work this prophet was ever called upon to perform. He must always warn his people that the inevitable disaster of the fall of Jerusalem was drawing nearer and nearer.

There is one feature of Ezekiel's call which makes it distinct from all others, and which is therefore especially worthy of note. The command was given: "Open thy mouth, and eat what I give thee." The result follows: "And when I looked, lo, a hand was stretched forth unto me; and, lo, in it was a book-roll; and he spread it before me: and it was written within and without. . . . And he said unto me, Son of man, eat what thou findest: eat this roll, and go speak unto the house of Israel."[1]

The peculiar feature here is that Ezekiel's inspiration was to come from a book. There was a written standard to which he was to conform. The prophet was no longer a free creator under the influence of the Spirit, but was guided by a previous revelation which is received as authoritative. Jeremiah indeed had been sent about the country to preach the newly discovered book of Deuteronomy,[2] but Ezekiel is commanded to eat a book containing the message he is to preach.

It is true that we must guard against taking too literally the bold figures of this prophet. We are not to understand that there was actually a body of written doctrine placed in his hands to which he swore conformity. That sort of shackles is a more modern invention, coming to the Church, I suppose, through the example of the State. But it does

[1] Ezek. ii. 8b–iii. 1. [2] Jer. xi. 1–8. See additional note (7).

mean that in Ezekiel's day we have reached the era of sacred books which have an authority for the people. The inaugural vision must reveal to the prophet in what manner the word of the Lord is to come to him, and in Ezekiel's case it came in the form of a written message. We have truly now reached the age of the literary prophet, for it is not unlikely that many of Ezekiel's messages were originally issued in written form. Toy says very aptly, "the eating of a book indicates a literary conception of prophecy different from that of the preceding prophets, but in accordance with the literary growth of the nation." [1]

But little needs to be added to our study to summarise the chief results. Yet these points may well be brought together here.

1. The prophet came to his office from the highest motives. He believed that he was expressly called to his ministry by the voice of God, a voice which he dare not disregard. He was no seeker after high station. Whether the prophet's mantle seemed better or worse than his own, he made the exchange not to please himself, but to please God. The manner of acquiring office betrays itself in its administration. He who uses a public office, ecclesiastical or political, as the means to gratify ambition for station, or as a source of revenue, can never be the true servant of God or man. The prophets held an office to which they were led by a will other than their own, a condition plainly written in the history of their official lives.

[1] *Ezekiel*, in Polychrome Bible, p. 97.

2. The call was due to the Spirit of God acting upon the heart of man, not to an external voice, audible only to the outward ear. This idea underlies the statements of the prophets, and is clearly the only interpretation which can be satisfactory. We could not hold God responsible for every utterance even of His holiest prophets. There is no way to avoid that responsibility if we put a literal construction upon the introductory formula "Thus saith Jahveh." The right to use that depends upon a sufficiently clear conception of God to know what He would say. The one who knows the life and heart of Jesus Christ may well solve his problems by asking what Jesus would do in like circumstances. The spiritually minded prophet, living in constant communion with God, and grasping the principles by which God came to govern the world, could rightly preface his utterances with his "Thus saith Jahveh." It is fair to assume that the call to the office came in the same way as the messages which the office involved.

3. None the less the call was real, the inspiration was real, the revelation was real. Spiritual influences are just as real as physical. The voice in the heart is just as real as the voice in the ear, though its interpretation requires a more delicate understanding. No one would assert that any Hebrew prophet knew the mind of God perfectly; but partial knowledge is still knowledge. The prophet was obliged to translate the inspiration which affected his soul into speech which might affect the souls of his fellows. That he always translated with absolute accuracy cannot be main-

tained; that he had a real message to translate is not to be doubted. There may have been prophets who mistakenly felt that they were divinely called. Hananiah may have been as certain of his call as Jeremiah. Mistakes were surely possible on the part of those for whom a later age could find no other name than false prophets. But on the part of others no mistake was made. The final test of prophecy was stated by Jesus to be the fruits of the office. We may apply that test to every canonical prophet, and then rejoice in the assured result that not one was mistaken in his belief that he was called of God.

4. The call was irresistible. So far as we know, or can conjecture from what knowledge we have, every great Hebrew prophet entered upon office reluctantly. The reluctance was not due to a disinclination to serve God or man, but to a deep sense of personal unfitness for such high office. For a long time some of them withstood the invitation, even as St. Paul stood against the goad which was driving him Christward; but God is patient and persistent, and in the end all objections were overcome.

It may indeed be true that God called to prophecy many a worthy Hebrew who either never came to feel the call sufficiently or whose scruples could not be removed. This is a matter of opinion, however, and we can never know the facts. We do know, though, that in the case of those prophets who made prophecy great, the call was so persistent and imperative that their resistance was broken down.

5. The call demanded of the prophet a surrender to the will of God. A Divine message would be

given him not always welcome to the people; not always welcome to the prophet; but he must be true to his inspiration, at whatever sacrifice to himself. The prophets were often told that their words would fall on unwilling ears; that opposition would even take an active form; but that they must boldly rebuke vice, however ardent the people might be in their efforts to silence the jarring remonstrance. The note of the true prophet was his faithfulness to his guidance. The unfailing mark of those who were called false prophets as early as the Christian era was their yielding to the demand of men at the sacrifice of Divine truth. (There were too many prophets then as now who kept the ear groundward.) There is a species of modern prophet, happily somewhat rare, who seems to think that the more he antagonises men the more certainly he is pleasing to God. Such prophets may have existed in Israel, but we do not know them. He who exaggerates the demands of God is as unfaithful as he who minimises them. Happily men are quite likely in all ages to listen to the voice of the true and wise prophet even if they do not always follow his counsel.

6. The call explains the secret of the prophet's power. When God really sends a man out into the world to proclaim His will, that man must exercise a great influence, for God has put a mighty force in his hands. However unwilling the people may be to hear or do, still the prophet is endowed with the power of God. The prophets were strong, because they were true; they were brave for the same reason. Loyalty to the deepest convictions of their souls,

loyalty to the truth which God had put in their hearts, made them the commanding figures they were, and set them high in the world's esteem, in spite of a life of suffering, and often a death of martyrdom.

7. Finally, there was no road to the office of prophet except that of the Divine call. Sanday says very truly, "We never hear of a prophet volunteering for his mission. It is laid upon them as a necessity from which they struggle to escape in vain."[1] Probably nothing struck Jeremiah more keenly than the charge which Shemaiah made that he was a prophet by his own appointment;[2] for it was a base injustice touching a vital matter. Nothing shows the high ideal of our own ministry more forcibly than the question in the ordinal, "Do you think in your heart, that you are truly called, according to the will of our Lord Jesus Christ . . . to the Order and Ministry of the Priesthood?" No one can be a prophet without the express call of God in this age any more than in the days of the Hebrew dispensation.

NOTE.—It is interesting to see that in the suggestive book of the late Dr. A. B. Davidson, *The Called of God*, there are included among those who received the call of God: Abraham, Jacob, Moses, Saul, Elijah, Isaiah, Jeremiah, John the Baptist, Nicodemus, Zacchæus, the Rich Young Ruler, and Thomas. A long period of time is covered in this list, many classes of men are selected, vastly different results were attained: not all of those were called to be prophets, but every call was real.

[1] *Bampton Lectures*, p. 150. [2] Jer. xxix. 27.

CHAPTER VI

THE PROPHET'S CREDENTIALS

TO accomplish the Divine end of prophecy there must be not only a man who will speak, but also people who will listen. We have considered in the preceding chapter the conditions which led the man to speak. In this chapter we shall take up the terms upon which the people would listen. Doubtless there would be many factors in determining that result, but only one is of primary importance for us, namely, the assurance that the man was duly qualified to speak in the name of God.

If a preacher could convince the people that he was really a prophet, that he actually had a message which God wished conveyed to man, there would be no difficulty in securing a hearing in any age of the world.[1] Is it possible for the people to be certain that a particular man speaks the mind of God? If it is, by what means is that assurance to be given? In other words, what are the prophet's credentials?

This is no idle inquiry, but is often a burning question. There were thousands of Jews in the time of

[1] This truth was understood by Zechariah: "In those days, ten men from all the foreign tongues shall seize the skirt of a man who is a Jew, saying, We will go with you; for we have heard that God is with you" (viii. 23).

our Lord who would have received Jesus gladly and would have followed Him even to the Cross, if they had been fully convinced that He was the Messiah promised of God. But how could they know? Their rulers pronounced Jesus a misleading impostor; what evidence was available for them in the face of this decree?

The story of Micaiah, already discussed,[1] affords a good concrete instance, and is a case where the problem was serious. The prophets of Ahab cried with absolute unanimity, "Go up and prosper." The solitary voice of Micaiah said, "Go up to your ruin." Ahab had the best of reasons for distrusting the counsel of his obsequious seers; but if he had been persuaded that Micaiah knew the truth, is it likely that he would have set out upon an expedition certain to result in disaster? And even if Ahab had been ready to take such a risk, would the godly Jehoshaphat have been willing to fly directly in the face of Providence, if he had been assured that Micaiah spoke the truth? Then there was a larger body interested in that expedition than the two kings. Thousands in the armies knew that they were going to certain triumph or to danger and death, as the one prophet or the other rightly foresaw the issue of the campaign. Could they tell positively which was right? If they had known that the son of Imlah spoke the truth, and the others a subservient lie, would there not have been such wholesale desertions as to render the campaign impossible for lack of troops?

Another example of the grave nature of the problem

[1] 1 Kings xxii.; see also above, p. 52 ff.

is afforded by the conflict between Jeremiah and Hananiah. The latter is called the prophet[1] just as Jeremiah is, but his message is absolutely contradictory to Jeremiah's. He throws down the glove in the most public manner. In the temple, before the priests and all the people, he addresses Jeremiah: "Thus saith Jahveh Sabaoth the God of Israel: I will break the yoke of the king of Babylon.[2] Within two years I will bring back to this place all the vessels of the house of Jahveh which Nebuchadrezzar the king of Babylon has taken from this place and carried to Babylon. And Jeconiah, the son of Jehoiakim, the king of Judah, and all the captivity of Judah who went to Babylon, will I bring back to this place, saith Jahveh: for I will break the yoke of the king of Babylon."[3]

The occasion of Hananiah's positive declaration is found in chapter xxvii. Jeremiah had put a yoke on his neck, and was wearing it as a symbol of submission; he had declared that safety could be found only in yielding to a superior force; that not only would the vessels already carried off not be brought back, but that there was serious danger that the few remaining in the temple might share the fate of their fellows; that the prophets who declared that the

[1] Jer. xxviii. 1. The difficulty was solved in Greek versions and Targums by altering the text and inserting "false" before "prophet."

[2] Jer. xxviii. 2, A.V., and R.V. "I have broken"; but the verb is the so-called prophetic perfect, which should be translated by a future tense.

[3] Jer. xxviii. 2–4. The Greek versions have a much simpler text, omitting much that is redundant, and that weakens the force of Hananiah's terse statement.

exile would soon be over spoke lies in the name of the Lord. Further, Jeremiah had already declared that Jeconiah (Jehoiachin) would die in exile.[1]

In the face of this utterance Hananiah stepped forward with his positive declaration, and followed it up by breaking the yoke which Jeremiah was wearing, and using his very violence as a symbol, says: "Thus saith Jahveh: even thus within two years will I break the yoke of Nebuchadrezzar the king of Babylon, from the necks of all the nations."[2]

Here was a direct issue, one prophet flatly contradicting another. How were the people to know which was right? Were there any means by which they might determine positively which counsel to follow? It was manifestly an important question; for one way led to the downfall of the nation, the other to its preservation.

We may at once dispose of the notion that the question could be settled by official authority; for both of these men, as the Hebrew scriptures testify, were accredited as prophets; one was as much entitled to speak in the name of Jahveh as the other, so far as official sanction was concerned. It follows, therefore, that official garb was not a sufficient guarantee that he who wore it was loyal to the truth of God, a fact unhappily evident in all ages.

We may also see that Jeremiah, a great and loyal prophet of God, who suffered more for the cause

[1] Jer. xxii. 26.

[2] Jer. xxviii. 11. The ground of Hananiah's confidence is supposed to be his knowledge that help had been promised by Egypt. It is certain that Zedekiah had joined an alliance against Babylon.

God had put in his heart than any other Hebrew prophet, had no signal to give the people as absolute proof that his words were true and his opponent's false. At first the poor prophet can only offer the plea, and we are constrained to admit that it is a feeble plea, that the prophet who predicted disaster was more likely to be right than the prophet who predicted peace. And even after he had taken time for reflection, he could only replace on his neck the broken bars of wood with bars of iron, and pronounce the doom of death upon Hananiah. I said "the poor prophet": I said it advisedly. For think of the pain and humiliation of one conscious of the truth, on seeing his truth set at naught by a lie. And think of the anguish of a soul ready to die for the welfare of his people as he sees them ready to follow a false leader who will speedily conduct them to a terrible doom.

I think no prophet could be unmindful of the force of the question we are considering. He must, of course, be assured himself that he has authority to speak in God's name, and that as a consequence what he says is true. But however important the truth is in itself, its end is to be received and followed by the people. The truth that we should not hate our enemies, but love them, is beautiful and important written on the face of the heavens, but beyond question more beautiful and more important written in the lives of men. Jesus got a hearing with the people because He spoke as one with authority. The properly accredited prophet will be listened to as no other. It is vital to the prophet's

full accomplishment of his mission, that his position as a prophet be recognised.

It might seem as if the call would settle that problem for the people as well as the prophet. When Amaziah broke in upon Amos and tried to send him from Bethel, was not the prophet's only answer the story of his call? And did he not then proceed with his mission, without let or hindrance from priest or king? Did not the prophets tell the people how they were called of God as a reason why their oracles should be heard and their counsel followed?

The call was the best possible evidence for the prophet, but was of little service to the people. For that is the very thing to be attested. The very words "thus saith the Lord" are a claim to have been called of God, but the call is not evidence of the claim. Moreover, the prophets do not use the call so much in evidence of their true inspiration as in explanation of their exercise of office. Amos could scarcely hope to satisfy Amaziah by the statement that Jahveh constrained him to do what he was doing; but it did serve as an adequate reason for his refusal to obey the mandate of the king.

I think every prophet must have felt this difficulty, even though not all have expressed it. But we find the matter clearly set forth in the oldest version of the call of Moses. Moses was perfectly satisfied that God summoned him to the great task of Israel's rescue. Whatever doubts he may have had on that score had been removed. But before he could bring Israel out of Egypt he must persuade them that the plan for their escape was no scheme of his own, but

the purpose of the God of their fathers. So we read, "And Moses answered and said: But behold, they will not believe me, nor listen to my plea; but they will say, Jahveh hath not appeared to thee."[1] Moses sees that there is no use going down to Egypt until he can answer that objection. The solution given to Moses introduces us to the commonest of all the credentials of the prophet. "And Jahveh said unto him, What is that in thy hand? And he answered, A rod. And He said, Cast it to the ground. When he cast it to the ground, it became a serpent, and Moses ran away from it. And Jahveh said unto Moses, Put forth thy hand, and take it by the tail. And he put forth his hand, and seized it, and it became a rod in his hand."[2]

By his ability to turn the rod into a serpent, and such a serpent as would frighten a man who had lived forty years in the wilderness, and the serpent back into a rod, Moses would establish his claim to speak in Jahveh's name. It may seem as if there is but slight connexion between turning a rod into a serpent, and knowledge of the will of God; but it was simple enough from the Hebrew point of view. The changing of the rod into the serpent was supernatural, that is, a manifestation of an extraordinary force due directly to God. The man who could exercise the Divine power in one manifestation could do it also in others. If God enabled a man to work signs, there was nothing He would withhold from him. The sign, therefore, or as it is often less accurately called, the miracle, was regarded as the

[1] Exod. iv. 1. [2] Exod. iv. 2–4.

most convincing evidence of the power of God in man, and that verdict held true for all ages of Hebrew history.

When Moses went to the Egyptian court to demand the release of the Hebrew people, he had no hope of persuading Pharaoh to comply except by proving to him that the demand would be backed up by such a display of Divine power as no king would dare withstand.[1] The story of the plagues is the story of a series of signs by which Moses sought to demonstrate to Pharaoh his own endowment with the power of God.

"All Israel, from Dan to Beersheba," so we read in 1 Samuel iii. 20, "knew that Samuel was established as a prophet of Jahveh." How did they know it? We are told that "Jahveh was with Samuel, and let none of his words fall to the ground."[2] That might mean that Jahveh fulfilled all of Samuel's sayings, but it admits of a larger interpretation, that whatever Samuel said or did was upheld by Jahveh. That statement suggests that there was undoubtedly a popular misconception of the relations between God and His prophet. The truth is, of course, that God will sustain His prophet just as long as he is true to his Divine guidance, and not a moment longer. If the salt loses its savour it is fit for no place but the dunghill. Christ promised that the gates of hell should not prevail against His Church. The pledge will hold so long as the Church is Christ's, *i.e.* true to

[1] Moses's rod was made the symbol of his wonder-working power before Pharaoh as well as before the Israelites (see *e.g.* Exod. iv. 17).

[2] 1 Sam. iii. 19.

His purpose; but if the Church shall ever cease to be Christ's, His sheltering arm will be withdrawn in a moment.

But the mass of the Hebrews did not have so refined a conception. Their idea was that when God set a man up as a prophet, the prophet might do or say what he pleased, and God was bound to sustain him. In other words, the powers placed in the hands of a prophet were unconditional. Because Jahveh was with Samuel, none of his words were allowed to fall to the ground.

Samuel did not hesitate to make use of his miraculous power to convince the people that his words were true. This appears in one of the two stories of the establishment of the kingdom,[1] in which Samuel is represented as wholly adverse to the new order. He must convince the people of their error, and he does it by a sign. At his call Jahveh sent a thunderstorm at the time of the wheat harvest. Nothing could be less miraculous in America than a thunderstorm at harvest-time, but in Palestine it was almost as unusual as a snowstorm in July,[2] and naturally produced a great effect upon the people, persuading them that the Lord did indeed uphold the words of His prophet, and that their wickedness was very great.

Elijah stakes upon the issue of a sign the right of Jahveh's claim to be the God of Israel. At Carmel

[1] For a fuller discussion of these accounts, see the author's *Old Testament from the Modern Point of View*, p. 168 ff.

[2] "As snow in summer, and as rain in harvest, so honour is not seemly for a fool" (Prov. xxvi. 1).

he summoned the whole mass of Baal's prophets to offer a sacrifice to their God while he offered one to Jahveh. Both parties were to lay the dressed victim on the wood, but not to put fire underneath. Then the challenge is boldly given: "And do ye call upon the name of your god, and I will call on the name of Jahveh; and it shall be that the god who answers by fire, he is God indeed."[1] In spite of the twelve barrels of water which were poured over Elijah's pyre, his prayer was heard, and the fire descended and consumed the sacrifice and the wood, and even the stones of which the altar was made, as well as the water in the trench. We need not trouble ourselves in this connexion with the question of the historicity of this story. We are chiefly concerned with Hebrew ideas, and whether this story is based on fact or fiction, it is clear that the Hebrews believed such things to be possible. Elijah was supposed to substantiate his message that Jahveh alone was the God of Israel by a stupendous sign, the force of which no one could resist.

It is a striking fact that the moment we reach the canonical prophets, and these were the great prophets, the sign occupies an inconspicuous place. Most of them, so far as we know, never wrought signs at all. Amos had a fine chance for the display of that kind of evidence when Amaziah attempted to silence him, but he made no appeal to other than spiritual power. Jeremiah had a splendid opportunity to crush his false opponent by a display of power which could only come direct from Heaven. He does, indeed,

[1] 1 Kings xviii. 24.

declare that Hananiah would die for his sins within the year, but that event was too long delayed to be effective as a sign.

Yet the sign does play a part in the prophetic career of the greatest of the great prophets. Isaiah wished to turn Ahaz from his fatal policy of an alliance with Assyria, which meant the degradation of Judah to a vassal state. The prophet declared that such succour was unnecessary; for the Syro-Ephraimitish coalition, which was the cause of Ahaz's terror, had no endurance, and would soon burn out what vitality it had. He offered proof that what he said was the word of God: "Ask thee a sign from Jahveh thy God, deep as sheol or high as heaven."[1] No matter how hard the sign might be to work, whether it was centred in the depths of earth or the heights of heaven, the prophet declared his readiness to stake his counsel upon its successful accomplishment. When Ahaz, with mock piety in his voice, refused the sign that was offered, that is, when it was clear that Ahaz refused to listen to God, being bent upon his own mad policy, then Isaiah gave him a sign, not, though, of the safety of Judah; for Ahaz's disobedience changed the issue of the future, and the child Immanuel was in one respect a sign of the disaster which the king's error would bring upon Judah.

When Hezekiah was seized with so severe an illness that the prophet declared that he would die,[2] the

[1] Isa. vii. 11.

[2] This incident need occasion no question of prophetic infallibility. The prophets were not infallible; and in any case there is no warrant for supposing that Isaiah meant any more than to pronounce an opinion based upon Hezekiah's symptoms. From the fact that he treated the

king prayed earnestly against death, and his prayer was heard. Isaiah was then sent to him with the message that he would yet live fifteen years. The prophet was not delivering an opinion of his own, but pronouncing the word of God. To prove this word he offers a sign that the shadow on the king's step-clock should go forward or backward ten degrees.[1] The king said that it would go forward itself; that would be no sign; let it go backward ten degrees. And backward it is said to have gone in answer to Isaiah's prayer to Jahveh.[2]

Hezekiah demanded a sign which at the same time would be a miracle; otherwise he could not see that it would prove anything. But the sign was by no means always miraculous. In the late prophets the term is generally applied to natural events. Thus when Isaiah goes naked and barefoot, his conduct is a sign to Judah.[3] Though not miraculous, his slave's

king for his ailment, Isaiah may have been a sort of practitioner in the art of healing. It would then not be the first case in which a patient has disproved the physician's prediction of death.

[1] I have followed the fuller version in 2 Kings xx. In Isa. xxxviii. the story is briefer, and the king is not offered a choice. The prophet declares that the shadow on the dial will go back ten degrees, and it does so; but there is no mention of the prophet's prayer. This version has the appearance of greater originality than that in Kings.

[2] This miracle presents a serious difficulty, which has been strangely dealt with by those bound to maintain the literal integrity of the Bible. The sign would naturally involve a backward course of the earth on its axis, and would be a degree more unnatural than Joshua's stopping of the sun. To regard the transaction as a juggler's trick, as many conservative commentators do, may be in harmony with Oriental habits, but it scarcely throws light on the ways of God. It is very likely that this story is based upon a fact which has been so obscured by successive narrators that the original statement is no longer recoverable.

[3] Isa. xx.

dress was a token or symbol of coming events. Jeremiah and Ezekiel use the natural sign frequently, and the miracle not at all. There is no record of a miracle worked by either of these great men. In fact, as we shall see shortly, the miraculous sign had already fallen into disrepute among the great men. But evidence is not lacking that the mass of the people never ceased to look for the sign as evidence of a man's authority to wear the prophet's mantle. In the pathetic description of the fallen condition of Israel in Maccabean days we find this :—

> "Our signs we see not, nor is there prophet;
> With us is not one that knows how long."[1]

The lack of signs and the lack of a prophet are virtually one and the same.

It is so well known as to need only mention that the Jews constantly demanded a sign of Jesus as proof that He spoke with Divine authority. Even when He was hanging on the Cross, the cry was raised that His persecutors were ready to accept Him as the Messiah if He would give them a convincing sign by descending from the Cross. In spite of this feeling that Jesus had wrought no adequate sign, it is beyond question that many were persuaded by virtue of the miracles He had performed. Nicodemus states the matter from the point of view of the upper classes, for he was well educated both in head and heart: "No man can do these signs that Thou doest, except God be with him."[2] The masses looked at the matter in the same way: "He hath done all

[1] Ps. lxxiv. 9. See p. 39.

[2] John iii. 2.

things well: He maketh even the deaf to hear, and the dumb to speak."[1]

Yet the ability to do a sign, however marvellous it might be, did not always serve as decisive proof. Many wonders were done in Egypt, even bearing hard upon the people, before Pharaoh released the Israelites from bondage. Ahaz in effect told Isaiah that he would not accept his counsel even if he did support it by a sign high as heaven or deep as sheol. The Sanhedrim made an exhaustive investigation of Jesus' cure of a case of congenital blindness, and rendered it as their final opinion that, while they could not deny the cure, the healer was a sinner.[2] So His casting out demons was attributed to alliance with Beelzebub the chief of demons.

The sign was unsatisfactory for another reason: its performance was not restricted to the men of God. Moses ran against this difficulty at the very start. He and Aaron went before Pharaoh, and as evidence of their Divine mission turned the divining rod into a serpent. But the king calls in his magicians, and every one of them turns his rod into a serpent by the secret art.[3] It is scarcely reasonable to suppose that Moses in this particular case exercised a power different from that of the Egyptian magicians. If that conclusion is sound, then we are almost startled by the suggestion that the signs are due to a magic art, still much in vogue in the East as a part of the religious vocation,[4] and in the West as an easy means

[1] Mark vii. 37. [2] John ix. [3] Exod. vii. 8 ff.

[4] The most wonderful of the feats performed in India are the work of men belonging to religious orders.

of securing a competent livelihood.[1] The understanding of the true nature of most of the signs is not improbably the explanation of the disrepute into which they fell.

The people are, however, not left to inference, but are expressly warned against signs and wonders as proof of the authority of one who essays to speak in the name of their God: "If a prophet or a dreamer appear in thy midst, and give thee a sign or wonder, and the sign or wonder came to pass, which he spake when he said, Let us go after other gods, . . . ye shall not listen to the words of that prophet or that dreamer, but Jahveh is testing you to find out whether you are loving Jahveh."[2] The writer does not deny the signality of the wonders; but he asserts that they prove something very different from what their performers suppose. The signs are to prove the strength of Israel's faith, not the authority of the prophet's utterance. The sign can do its Divine work, only if the people disregard its apparent leading.

The teaching and practice of Jesus are the decisive blows against the apologetic value of signs. The temptations which He endured were in substance merely the settlement of the problem in His own ministry whether He was to depend upon signs or not. The answer was clear, and His course consistent with the settlement reached at the beginning. In every case He refused to give a sign as proof of His authority; He lamented the popular craving for

[1] *e.g.* the healing by Christian scientists.

[2] Deut. xiii. 2–4.

miracles;[1] and gave this express warning to His disciples: "There shall arise false Christs and false prophets, and shall show great signs and wonders; so as to lead astray if possible, even the elect."[2] The true voice of God could not be hazarded on the issue of a sign. So it is testified of the forerunner of the Christ, "John indeed did no sign."[3]

In view of these facts, it is singular that the miracle has played such an important rôle in the Christian apologetics of the past, and to a certain extent of the present. Someone has said that the remarkable growth of Christian science is the measure of the credulity of the people. It may be more truly said that it is a measure of the persistence of the belief in the apologetic value of signs. The healer removes the ache, and the cure is a sign of the Divine authority of the whole system. It would be quite as reasonable to set up Mr. Kellar's wonderful exploits as evidence that the moon is made of green cheese. The logical difficulty with the sign is the lack of connexion between the proof and the thing to be proved. One may be able to relieve a toothache by mental processes; but he does not thereby establish the medley of philosophy and religion as set forth by Mrs. Eddy. One may turn his rod into a serpent, and that does prove him possessed of a mysterious power, but it does not demonstrate that God wishes Pharaoh to release his most valuable slaves. The miracles of

[1] As a good example we may cite John iv. 48; Jesus says to the nobleman who sought succour for his son, "Except ye see signs and wonders, ye will in no wise believe."

[2] Matt. xxiv. 24; cf. Mark xiii. 22. [3] John x. 41.

Jesus differ from most of the signs, in that they were inextricably bound up with His method of work, and were never meaningless wonders performed to impress the people. Their evidential value is to be found, not in the similarity to other signs, but in their difference from them.[1]

The sign, which was the most decisive proof of the Divine authority of the prophet in the early days, came to be regarded as wholly unreliable evidence by thoughtful men. What took its place in apologetics? If the sign was no proof, what was valid evidence for or against the claim of a seer?

A kind of evidence which developed late in Israel, and which has persisted down to the present time, is the fulfilment of predictive prophecy. Prediction is but a minor element in the highest order of prophecy. In time past the place of prediction was so unduly magnified[2] that it is not surprising that recent writers have almost ignored its existence. But the truth is in neither extreme. The power to forecast the future was one of the leading qualifications of the early fortune-telling seers;[3] and though prediction occupied a less prominent place in the later prophecy, we may

[1] The miracles of Elisha are most like those of the great Master. They were wrought for a beneficent end, not to astonish the people. For example, we may take the rescue of the axe, if indeed that is a miracle. The prophet who lost it had no money; the axe was borrowed, and was very valuable. The poor prophet was in a serious difficulty, from which the chief extricates him.

[2] Justin Martyr's definition of a prophet makes him essentially a forecaster: "There were among the Jews certain men who were prophets of God, through whom the prophetic spirit published beforehand things that were to come to pass ere ever they happened" (*First Apologia*, c. xxxi.).

[3] See chap. i. p. 8 ff.

yet see its supreme importance by recalling the fact that all Messianic prophecy is of necessity predictive.

Messianic prophecy is looked at very differently to-day from what it was even a few years ago. The specific predictions of Christ, which our fathers believed they had found in vast quantity in the Old Testament, have not been able to bear the test of the microscopic examination of modern scientific methods. But the most radical scholar affirms with great positiveness the supreme importance of Messianic prophecy. But our concern now is not Messianic prophecy, but the fulfilment of predictive prophecy as a source of evidence. We find that this occupies a considerable place in the Old Testament, and a still larger place in the New Testament.

In its earliest form the appeal to fulfilment and the sign border on each other very closely. Thus in Samuel's calling of the thunderstorm, already referred to,[1] there may be almost as much proof in the fulfilment of the prophet's prediction that a thunderstorm would come as in the thunderstorm itself.

Micaiah stakes his mission as a true prophet of Jahveh upon the fulfilment of his prediction of disaster; the prophet's reply to the king's order to put him in prison until he returned in peace was, "If thou ever return at all in safety, Jahveh has sent no message by me."[2]

Jeremiah alluded to this test of prophecy when he was confronted by Hananiah: "the prophet who predicts peace: when the word of the prophet is fulfilled, then will he know the prophet whom Jahveh

[1] See above, p. 113. [2] 1 Kings xxii. 28.

has truly sent."[1] The proof of the Divine mission is to be found in fulfilment of the prophet's words. The prophets of old foretold war, evil, and pestilence. The presence of these evils proves the inspiration of those who predicted them. If the peace which Hananiah so confidently predicts shall actually come, it will be adequate proof that Jahveh truly speaks by him. There is no reason to doubt that Zedekiah's growing feeling in favour of Jeremiah's counsel, as the final catastrophe grew near, was due to his observation that the course of events was following with painful closeness the forecasts of the persecuted prophet.

Jeremiah had long before preached to the people the contents of a law book which gave a rule to determine the true prophet from the false. The problem is put in the question: "If thou say in thy heart, How shall we know the word which Jahveh has not spoken?" Then the answer is given: "Whatever the prophet speaks in the name of Jahveh, and it occurs not, nor comes true, that is the word which Jahveh has not spoken."[2] The final test of prophecy is its fulfilment. Briggs places a wider interpretation on this passage than it will bear.[3] What he says about the test of prophecy is true, but it does not follow from this passage. The one test here given is fulfilment.

Ezekiel found quite early in his career as a prophet a widespread scepticism based upon the non-fulfilment of prophecy. It had come to be a proverb in the land of Israel that "the days grow long, and every vision fails."[4] The prophets had long declared

[1] Jer. xxviii. 9.
[2] Deut. xviii. 21 f.
[3] *Mess. Proph.*, p. 23 f.
[4] Ezek. xii. 22.

that disaster was near at hand. As the days went by and nothing happened, the people lost confidence in the prophetic forecast. Ezekiel himself does not dispute the conclusion, but he does reject the premises. He declares that the present generation will see the downfall of Jerusalem, and so have the proof of prophetic authority and power. Ezekiel in Babylonia, like Jeremiah in Jerusalem, gained repute as a prophet as the approaching disaster became only too plain to his fellow-exiles.[1]

In Deutero-Isaiah we find the most use of this kind of evidence. The appeal to fulfilment is there much more frequent than anywhere else in the Old Testament. The long sojourn in a foreign land, and the inevitable weakening of old religious ties, made a new apologetic necessary. The prophet of the exile seeks it in the right place. The character of Jahveh as Creator of the world, as the providential director of the affairs of men, was the ground upon which he based his hope. Jahveh is made to challenge the idols of Babylon :—

"Bring forward your suit, saith Jahveh;
Produce your idols, says Jacob's king.
Let them draw near and announce to us what shall happen.
The former events how they were foretold, do ye announce, that we may reflect upon them:
Or else the future events do ye declare to us, that we may work their issue;
Announce the things that are to come hereafter, that we may know that ye are gods."[2]

[1] See especially Ezek. xxxiii. 33.

[2] Isa. xli. 21 f. Cheyne's translation. See also xlii. 9; xliii. 8 ff.; xliv. 7 f.

Jahveh's power to forecast the future—a power the prophet denies to the Babylonian gods—is a strong argument for Israel's return to the worship of the God of their fathers.

In a subsequent passage the fulfilment of prophecy is looked at from another side. Among the acts of Israel's God the prophet specifies: "Fulfilling the word of His servants[1] and the counsel of His messengers He confirms."[2]

This statement is peculiarly interesting, because it opens up a field of inquiry somewhat akin to that suggested by the statement that Jahveh let none of Samuel's words fall to the ground.[3]

Literally this passage implies that Jahveh fulfils what the prophets said because they said it. We are reminded of the famous declaration of Elijah: "There shall not be dew nor rain these years, but according to my word."[4] Is it true that Jahveh delegated to a prophet a power to speak or act according to his own discretion, and that Jahveh is bound to support the act or deed? Was that idea prevalent among the prophets? Did they believe themselves clothed with so great a power?

These questions raise a large subject. We cannot follow it out in all directions, but will look at the matter in a simple way. First, we may say confidently that God never delegated to any man a Divine power to use as he willed. Naturally I do not wish to

[1] I follow Dillmann and Cheyne in reading the plural. The sense and parallelism with "messengers" require this. The servants were the whole body of the prophets, not a particular one.

[2] Isa. xliv. 26. [3] See above, p. 112. [4] 1 Kings xvii. 1.

be taken too literally. I suppose we are all possessed with Divine power after a sort, and we may certainly use it as we will. But we are dealing here with the extraordinary power of the prophet. The prophet was a man of God, not because God was bound to do the prophet's will, but because the prophet was bound to do God's will. That Jesus was greater than any prophet, we might know from the stress He lays upon the complete surrender of His will to God's.[1]

It is not so sure, however, that the prophets themselves always understood the limitation of their powers. Amos, indeed, comprehended it, and stated the truth finely: "The Lord Jahveh will take no action except He disclose His purpose to His servants the prophets."[2] Such a passage as that in Isaiah, quoted above,[3] may be interpreted as a free expression of the same truth. The idea in the prophet's mind may be that Jahveh confirms the words of His servants, for the very reason that the word of the servants was the word of the Master. It is quite probable that the distinction is one that would not occur to a prophet. His word and Jahveh's word were so completely one that, in his mind, a distinction of cause and effect could hardly exist.

In these cases the fulfilment refers to the predictions of prophets who had foretold both the exile and the restoration. This seer discerns the end of the

[1] It is true that Jesus acknowledges a power to do that which is forbidden by a moral constraint. He had power to call angels to His succour, yet it would not be right for Him to do so (Matt. xxvi. 53 f.). [2] Amos iii. 7. [3] See p. 124.

enforced sojourn in Babylon, and so declares the end as foreseen and foretold. But he had begun his declarations of the fall of Babylon and the release of the Jews long before it happened.[1]

The prophet therefore, like Jeremiah and Ezekiel before him, was soon able to appeal to the fulfilment of his own words, not as proof of his own foresight and sagacity, but of Jahveh's unbounded knowledge and power. Isaiah xlviii. is a review of the situation of the exiles just after Cyrus had taken Babylon. The prophet naturally sounds the note of triumph because Jahveh's word is fulfilled, and with this proof he would inspire the sceptical exiles with a clearer faith. I quote a single passage:—

"I have declared the former things from of old: yea, they went forth out of My mouth, and I showed them: suddenly I did them, and they came to pass."[2] In fact, the very object of Jahveh in foretelling what should come was the kindling of a stronger faith: "Because I knew that thou art obstinate, and thy neck is an iron sinew, and thy brow brass; therefore have I declared it to thee from of old; before it came to pass I showed it thee; lest thou shouldst say, Mine idol hath done them, and my graven image, and my molten image, hath commanded them."[3] It was not enough that Jahveh should restore exiled Israel; the mere act, however glorious, might be attributed to the images; but when the act was at the same time the fulfilment of prediction uttered long before, then

[1] Several years ago I dealt with this subject in a paper on the Historical Movement Traceable in Isaiah xl.–lxvi. *Andover Review*, August, 1888. [2] Isa. xlviii. 3. [3] Isa. xlviii. 4 f.

the forecaster had strong proof that he who foresaw was also he who fulfilled.

The problem of the restoration is just now a vexed one among Biblical scholars. There is a rapidly growing belief that there was, properly speaking, no restoration at all, so far as the exiles were concerned: that to the extent that Jerusalem was rebuilt, it was the work of those Jews who had never left Palestine. It falls to me to take up this difficult problem in another place;[1] it only concerns me here to say that if any of the exiles returned to Judah, and it is difficult to believe otherwise, their faith in their God was largely rekindled by the argument from the fulfilment of prophecy. Whatever final value the argument may have in apologetics, there can be no doubt that it has served its purpose in its day.

But, after all, the evidence from fulfilment was in greatest vogue in the Apostolic age. Jesus did, indeed, appeal to this argument,[2] but only rarely. To the Apostles, whose field of labour was the race of Israel, it was the chief and most effective argument. The Jews believed that there was a great body of predictive prophecy in their Scriptures; they believed that it would be fulfilled to the very letter;[3] the test of the Messiah would be His correspondence to prophecy.

It is clear then that to convince a Jew that Jesus was the Christ, it was necessary to show that the life of Jesus was in accord with Messianic prophecy.

[1] "Ezra and Nehemiah," *International Critical Commentary*. (In preparation.)

[2] "The scriptures must be fulfilled" (Mark xiv. 49).

[3] *e.g.* The determination of the birthplace of the Messiah (Matt. ii. 4 ff.).

Thus we understand the oft-recurring phrase in St. Matthew's Gospel, which was surely written for Jewish readers, "that it might be fulfilled," as if Jesus ordered His life according to the predictions of the prophecy of old.

Certain Jews beyond the Jordan found testimony both to John and to Jesus in the fulfilment of the former's predictions. Though John did no sign and therefore lacked one of the commonest credentials of a prophet, yet "all things whatsoever John spake of this man (Jesus) have come true."[1]

Much stress was laid upon this argument in Christian apologetics until quite recent times.[2] In the present day apologists make little appeal to this argument, for the larger and more accurate knowledge of the Bible has greatly impaired its value. We are now constrained to admit that much of the predictive prophecy never has been fulfilled, and probably never will be fulfilled. And that is not all. It has frequently happened that the actual event was radically different from the prediction. Naturally we cannot base the inspiration of the prophet upon his power to foresee the future, if at any time his foresight proves incorrect. God's foreknowledge is accurate: and if a man partook of God's foresight his must needs be accurate too.

It may seem that the failure of correspondence between prediction and fulfilment has more than a negative force. It certainly fails to prove the inspiration of the prophets; but does it not also prove that they were not inspired? The negro who recently

[1] John x. 41. [2] See Bruce's *Apologetics*.

predicted a tidal wave which would destroy an important resort on the American sea-coast had quite a following until the day came for fulfilment. As the sea obstinately refused to roll in at the appointed time, it was agreed, even among those who had been deluded, that the prophet was a fraud. Is a similar judgment to be pronounced upon Jeremiah because some of his predictions still await fulfilment? Or do the Apostles lose credit because they declared that Jesus would return to earth in their day?

We must lay aside any consideration of time; that is, mere delay in fulfilment is not to be reckoned against the foretellers. The nearer one comprehends the mind of God, the less arbitrary are distinctions of time and place. One day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.[1] If a prophecy is reasonably fulfilled in other respects, the time question need never disturb us. This consideration helps a little in removing the difficulty; but it must be frankly admitted that it does not go far. We are forced to admit that a true prophet may be an indifferent forecaster, or else deny that there ever was a true prophet.

The prophets were sent to Israel to save the nation, not to play the rôle of soothsayers and to withdraw the veil of the future to satisfy a morbid curiosity. It is but occasionally that they venture predictions at all, and then chiefly as expressions of their sublime faith in God. It is clear that the faulty interpretation of the prophets has been

[1] See Phillips Brooks' sermon on "The Shortness of Time"; and Briggs' *Messianic Prophecy*, p. 52 ff.

responsible for no little of the mischief. They have been made to predict where they did not predict at all,[1] and they have been made to foretell details which were quite foreign to their minds.[2] The prophet was led to see that the conditions in Israel would produce certain results whether of weal or woe. They declare what those results will be, hoping thereby to restrain Israel from the vice which will result in evil, or to arouse them to the virtue which will issue in good. They were not trying so much to disclose in detail what the future would be, as to kindle enthusiasm for a sober, righteous, and godly life. They dressed up their picture of the future so as to make it impressive for the present. They are therefore scarcely to be held responsible for a failure in accuracy. They were not realists, but idealists of the boldest sort. A novelist is condemned by a realistic critic because a character he has portrayed is not true to life. But what does that matter if the character is interesting and instructive?

Moreover, as already suggested, much of the prediction was conditional[3] upon Israel's conduct. The brightness or darkness of the future, which the

[1] *e.g.* when St. Matthew quotes "Out of Egypt have I called My son" from Hosea xi. 1, where it is a mere historical statement without allusion to the future at all.

[2] In the Bethlehem prophecy already alluded to, it was no part of the prophet's purpose to foretell where Jesus Christ should be born (see Micah v. 2).

[3] Conditional prophecy is a big subject in itself. Jonah was unwilling to announce the destruction of Nineveh because he felt sure that the Ninevites would repent, and then God would not fulfil his prediction. He knew that the issue of his forecast depended upon the conduct of the people whose destruction he announced.

prophet graphically depicts, is dependent upon the life of the people. Many a glorious prediction remains unfulfilled because the nation was too unworthy, and some fearful disasters announced by the prophets failed to appear, because Israel repented.

Finally, it must be noted that inspiration and infallibility are by no means the same. A prophet might have his whole soul charged with the Spirit of God without becoming thereby possessed of a knowledge of the future, which God has wisely kept exclusively within His own ken.

Prophecy urgently demands a more immediate test than fulfilment affords. To take the problem of Zedekiah and his court, already quoted,[1] it is plain that the test of fulfilment could not be determined for two years. If Hananiah was right, however, it was essential that the whole power of the nation should be marshalled for a defensive war; if, on the other hand, Jeremiah was right, then the people must beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning-hooks. Jeremiah's prediction could not be fulfilled if Hananiah's advice was taken, nor could the latter's hopeful outlook be realised if Jeremiah's tame policy was followed. It was a matter of life or death for the nation as they adopted one course or the other; it was evidently then a question of great moment, whose credentials were valid.

In the passage of Deuteronomy quoted above[2] there is a suggestion of a test which is less definite than signs or fulfilment, but nevertheless reaches a much higher truth. The writer's argument may be

[1] See p. 107 f. [2] Deut. xiii.; see p. 119.

plainly stated. Under no circumstances are you to worship other gods than Jahveh. No matter how cunningly you may be counselled, no matter by what miracles your seducers may support their plea, it is a fundamental obligation that you be loyal to Jahveh. A prophet may arise able to work the most wonderful signs, but if he urges you to depart from Jahveh, he is a false and mischievous prophet, and is to meet the penalty of death.

There is therefore a moral standard to which the prophet must conform, and the value of his prophecy was to be measured by that standard. A prophet who advises the people to do wrong is a false prophet, even if he is able to work miracles. Whatever value the sign might have as evidence, it must always give way to the higher test, conformity to the truth. Hananiah made a great hit before the people by breaking the symbol of submission upon his adversary's neck; Jeremiah put an iron yoke in place of the wooden one to show that truth could not be disposed of so summarily. In that very controversy Jeremiah seems to have groped, even though somewhat blindly, after that highest standard of prophecy. His point was that the people had reason to believe his message, all the more because it foreboded an evil time. If the people had paused to analyse, instead of madly seizing at straws in conformity with their desires, they might have seen many reasons to urge the accuracy of Jeremiah's forecast. He had prophesied already for several years, and had shown that he could not be swerved by persecution. The political outlook was all in favour of Jeremiah. The

impotence of an alliance of small jealous nations against the great power of Babylon, and the futility of dependence upon Egyptian aid, had been shown again and again in history. However difficult the problem appeared to Zedekiah's court, it is plain now, and was plain then, on which side was the lover of truth and its upholder at whatever personal peril.

Jesus develops this idea, and has given us in a few sayings the final credentials which we may ask of any prophet, and by which we may determine the validity of any prophetic utterance. "Beware of the false prophets," He said, showing that He had this very problem in mind, "which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. By their fruits ye shall know them. . . . Every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but the corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. . . . Therefore by their fruits ye shall know them."[1]

One might be unable to distinguish the grape-vine from the thorn-bush, but every man knows the difference between grapes and thorns, and the fruit determines the vine which bears it. If grapes are borne, then the plant is a grape-vine, and no miracle could prove it a thorn-bush. If the produce was thorns, then no sign, high as heaven or deep as sheol, could prove that the plant which bore it was a grape-vine. That was the principle of His answer to His troubled forerunner. He staked the Baptist's faith upon the fruit of the tree. "Go your way and tell John the things which ye do hear and see: the

[1] Matt. vii. 15 ff.

blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, and the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them. And blessed is he, whosoever shall find none occasion of stumbling in Me."[1]

Yet this test is not devoid of difficulty. It cannot always be of immediate application; man is impatient to pull up the tares at once, and finds it hard to wait until the harvest days clearly reveal the difference between the wheat and the weeds. Occasionally it is important to have the knowledge at once, though more often than we realise it is the path of wisdom to allow full liberty to the suspected prophet. The fuller chance he has to bear fruit, the sooner his real character will be revealed. The world rids itself of false prophets quickly, when once their falseness is convincingly shown. The Church would have freed herself from heretical prophets more completely if, instead of putting them in jail, she had hired a hall for them.

Jesus offers another test, however, which is of immediate application. It was given for the benefit of those who were perplexed about their relations to Him. Was He a good man, as some declared, or did He deceive the people, as others alleged? Should one follow His word loyally, or join those who were already beginning to hound Him to death?[2]

To those who were thus troubled, Jesus offers

[1] Matt. xi. 4 ff.

[2] A wiser course than the latter was indeed open, as suggested later by Gamaliel about the Apostles (Acts v. 34 ff.). But to the average Jew there were but two sides, for God or against Him, and the choice could not wait.

this help: "If any man willeth to do His will, he shall know of the teaching, whether it be of God, or whether I speak from Myself."[1]

Here is a test of prophecy which lies wholly in the hearer. There is a quality in him, provided his heart is in the right place, which makes him a capable judge of the Divine in another. There is a truth in his own heart which answers to the truth in another's heart. To be a judge of the truth, it is a prerequisite that one be a lover of the truth.

These two tests of Jesus are the final ones. The latter we are in need of applying all the time. This would have saved Ahab from the terrible death to which he was led by heeding the false voice of his subservient seers; it would have saved Ahaz from his costly alliance with Assyria; it would have saved Zedekiah from the fatal policy which he adopted as the result of the specious counsels of Hananiah. Every one of these kings desired to do his own will, and would have had his God confirm that, even as many a Christian's version of the Lord's Prayer would properly be "my will be done on earth as God's is done in heaven."

The first test, that of the fruits, has been relentlessly applied, and has separated the Hananiahs from the Jeremiahs. As early as the making of the Greek version the fruits were known, and Hananiah and others of his ilk were called by a name which their contemporaries could scarcely give them—false prophets. Every prophet of the present must know that he must face both tests. If he is a true prophet

[1] John vii. 17.

he will know it himself, and need have no fear of the derisive cries which may beset him; for in the end even the world will judge him by his fruits. Many a prophet has been denounced in his day as a bramble-bush who, when the test of the harvest could be applied, was shown to be the choicest vine, because he had brought forth the choicest fruit.[1]

[1] See Isa. liii.

CHAPTER VII

THE WRITINGS OF THE PROPHETS

FOR the knowledge of the prophets who preceded Amos, we are limited to such information as we find incorporated in the history of Israel and Judah. The historians chose such portions of prophetic biography as were most serviceable in throwing light upon the religious history of the people. The excerpts, usually mere fragments, fail to satisfy one who would gladly know more of such men as Nathan, Gad, Iddo, Ahijah, Shemaiah, and Micaiah. The selected portions are apparently taken bodily from lives of the prophets. These lives, however, are not autobiographies; the prophets did not write their own histories. Yet there is evidence that these early seers used the pen as well as the voice.

The Chronicler names as sources of his information a long list of prophetic histories. We find the following so mentioned: the Words of Samuel the Seer, the Words of Nathan the Prophet, the Words of Gad the Seer;[1] the Prophecy of Ahijah the Shilonite, the Vision of Iddo the Seer;[2] the Words of Shemaiah the Prophet and Iddo the Seer;[3] A Midrash of the Prophet Iddo;[4] the Words of Jehu the son of Hanani;[5] the Acts of Uzziah written by Isaiah the

[1] 1 Chron. xxix. 29. [2] 2 Chron. ix. 29. [3] 2 Chron. xii. 15.
[4] 2 Chron. xiii. 22. [5] 2 Chron. xx. 34.

son of Amoz the prophet;[1] the Words of the Seers.[2] According to these statements, nearly all of the prophets known to us were historians. By "the Words of Samuel," the Chronicler means writing of Samuel. It is expressly said that Isaiah wrote the chronicles of Uzziah.

It is true that the Chronicler's authority is not very highly esteemed. The opinion prevails widely among scholars that all the above-quoted sources are, as a matter of fact, one and the same, and that a Midrash or annotated edition of the history of Israel and Judah.[3] The sections in which a certain prophet figured were called by his name, and finally assigned to his authorship. It would therefore follow that the above-named prophets were, as a matter of fact, merely figures in the history, and not authors of history.

On the other hand, it is beyond question that the authors of all Hebrew history were prophets. The books from Joshua to Kings were called by the Hebrews the Former Prophets; this naming may be a critical blunder, as Kittel supposes, but there is a good deal of sober truth in it, nevertheless, for the history everywhere bears the prophetic imprint. The motive is nowhere historical, but everywhere religious. The books were composed with a distinct moral

[1] 2 Chron. xxvi. 22.

[2] 2 Chron. xxxiii. 19. I follow LXX. reading החזים instead of a proper name Hozai; so Benzinger, Kuenen, and most others.

[3] But if we follow LXX., as Benzinger does, in 1 Chron. xxxii. 32, reading "and in the books of the kings," etc., then some of the prophecies were surely distinct writings. See further, Kittel, *Hist.*, ii. 223 ff.; Driver, *L.O.T.*[6], 529 f.; Kuenen, *Einleitung*, i. ii. 155 ff.; Benzinger, *Bücher der Chronik*, x. ff.

purpose. The authors cared little about the detailed facts of history, but much about the religious lessons of the same. The life of the people of the past was significant for the life of the people of the present. It was perfectly natural, therefore, that the defence of St. Stephen the martyr should be a review of Jewish history.

Now it is by no means improbable that the prophets in their addresses were wont to tell historic stories to reinforce their teaching. In fact, we know that such appeals to the past were not uncommon. The prophets were the educated men; they knew the history of their people. They may themselves have never gone beyond the oral description of particular events. Their historical stories may have been put in written form by others. But some prophets certainly wrote the history of their nation, and it may well be that those known to us did an important part of this work. The Chronicler, therefore, may have preserved a true tradition, though inexact in his explicit statements. His professed extracts from prophetic writings show the post-exilic language; he therefore does not quote from original sources. My point is that from the Chronicler's witness, we may reasonably hold that these were prophetic historical writings, even though he does not take literal extracts from them.

Further, the Chronicler informs us that Elijah sent a letter to Jehoram the king of Judah. The letter was a prophecy, reproaching the king for his evil courses, and predicting disaster to king and people.[1]

[1] 2 Chron. xxi. 12 ff.

However it may be with the earliest seers, certain it is that for Amos and those who followed him, we are on sure ground. For them we are not limited to second-hand information, but have the original sources; not, indeed, a history of their times, but something far better, a record of the very words of these messengers of God. In this connexion certain questions inevitably force themselves upon us.

Whence came these records? Does the descriptive term "writing prophets" correctly represent the facts? Did these men with their own hands record their utterances? or did some other hand gather up such fragments as were available? Again, did the prophets write out in advance what they would say? or did they depend upon the memory, writing out each utterance after its delivery? And if this last be the case, did they write exactly what they had said? or were they influenced by that inevitable human tendency to improve or modify an address in the course of reproduction? Finally, what was the object of writing? Did their knowledge of the future constrain them to rescue their oral sayings for the sake of posterity, and for the making of holy writ? Had they literary ambitions? Or did they write, as they spoke, with an immediate object? and was that the moral and spiritual upbuilding of the men of their day and generation?

Some of these questions are not peculiar to the Old Testament. When as a lad I was reading the orations of Cicero against Catiline, I supposed at first that I was reading speeches which the great Roman orator had written in advance, and then read to his

auditors. But I came across passages which were due to the attitude of Catiline during the delivery of the speech. Cicero could not have anticipated that quailing of his victim. Then I began to ask most of the questions catalogued above, and especially this: if Cicero or a secretary wrote the speeches from memory, how do we know that we have his *ipsissima verba?* For stenographers existed neither in ancient Rome nor in ancient Israel.[1] Similar questions confront us in the New Testament. We have there what purport to be the words of Jesus. Now our Lord did not write Himself. The record of His sayings is due to His disciples, in the broad sense of that term. The words of Jesus differ very much as reported by St. John and by the other Evangelists. Are we quite sure that we have His exact words? Manifestly not, though we are loath to admit such an unwelcome truth; for the same parable or saying frequently exists in variant forms in different gospels. Some modern scholars have been making an effort to recover the exact words of Jesus by a retranslation into Aramaic,[2] the native tongue of our Lord. Their efforts have not been very kindly received, perhaps because Christians dread to see this question fairly opened. Such an apprehension is groundless. We may have our confidence shaken in the possession of our Lord's exact words; but the conviction will be persistent that we are in no doubt about His teaching.

Our concern now, however, is not the greatest of all teachers, but those men of the nation of Jesus

[1] See additional note (8).

[2] See, *e.g.* Briggs, *Gen. Introd.*, and works on New Test.

who preceded Him, and gave to the world such lesser light as God had been able to bestow upon them. To answer the inevitable questions, we have some direct and valuable evidence and some suggestive hints. From a careful study of these we ought to be able to draw some fairly accurate conclusions, though we may not find a detailed answer to every question raised above.

A word of warning may well be interposed here. We always need to be careful not to confuse facts and conclusions from the facts. There has been too much of that mixture in Biblical studies both by the harmonisers of the past and the radicals of the present. One is bound to interpret, he is of little use as a teacher otherwise; but he is an unsafe guide unless it is easy to see when he is arraying indisputable facts, and when he is stating his inferences. Facts are better on the whole, though interpretation is more interesting. In the work before us we will first of all present some facts which no one can gainsay.

In the fourth year of Jehoiakim, king of Judah, 605 B.C., and therefore twenty-one years after Jeremiah had begun to preach, the prophet by Divine command dictated to Baruch, who served as his secretary, the prophecies he had delivered in the course of his ministry. The object of gathering a written collection of his utterances is stated in these words: "It may be that the house of Judah will hear all the evil which I purpose to do unto them; that they may return every man from his evil way; that I may forgive their iniquity and their sin."[1]

[1] Jer. xxxvi. 3; cf. also ver. 7.

The laborious task occupied Jeremiah and his scribe a year or more;[1] we may be sure that it was a big year's work.

Then Baruch read the whole collection of prophecies—the first book of the kind known to us in Hebrew history—first to the people assembled to keep a special fast, and later to the king's officers who had been told of the bold step of the persecuted prophet. These men felt that they must tell the king, first giving the authors of the dangerous oracles time to hide. The king seemed to think, like the Church of Rome with its *Index expurgatorius*, that unwelcome words may be wiped out by fire. The roll was burnt; but the prophet was left, and he immediately set to work to replace the lost book; and added to the new edition many prophecies of similar import.

Such are the salient facts told in Jeremiah xxxvi., a notable chapter and valuable for many reasons. It appears that Jeremiah had been preaching for some twenty years without any thought of recording his addresses. What led him to adopt a new course? To say that God commanded it solves the problem only to raise it in another form: Why did God so command?

Jeremiah himself gives a reason for Baruch's reading the prophecies to the people rather than himself: "I am restrained; I am unable to enter the house of Jahveh."[2] What was the restraint? Th-

[1] The command was given in the fourth year, the finished book w- read in the ninth month of the fifth year (Jer. xxxvi. 1, 9). Therefo- the time intervening was from ten to twenty months.

[2] Jer. xxxvi. 5.

word I have rendered "restrained" may mean imprisoned; but that sense is inapplicable here; the princes advised Baruch that he and his master had better seek a secure hiding-place as promptly as possible. If Jeremiah were already in jail, he could seek no shelter from the king's wrath. The restraint might be due to a vow or to "a ceremonial impurity," as W. Robertson Smith holds;[1] but that sense is weak in this place. Jeremiah was scarcely the man, priest though he was, to be kept from his real duty by petty questions of ritual. The restraint might be, and I believe was, the danger to which the prophet would be exposed the moment he appeared in public. The king's ire had been so aroused that Jeremiah could only speak in public at the peril of his life. If he had come forward again with one of his to the king treasonable utterances, it would certainly have been his last message. He was ready to lay down his life for his God; but at that time it would be a useless and untimely sacrifice.[2] Still the enforced silence galled him now as much as the enforced speaking at another time. In his dilemma the thought came to him that the pen was mightier than the sword. The works of Micah, and of other prophets doubtless, existed already in written form.[3] Here was an idea destined to be so important in his work that Jeremiah easily,

[1] *Religion of the Semites*, p. 436 f.; so Duhm, "Jeremia," *in loc.*

[2] But a short time before this the priests and prophets had tried to secure his execution; the temple would not be a very safe place for the delivery of such prophecies as he had written. The issue of events showed his wisdom. See also chap. x.

[3] Jer. xxvi. 18.

and I believe rightly, traces its origin to the inbreathing spirit of God. Jehoiakim might silence the voice, but the pen would make a record which would tell its tale even if the author paid the penalty with his life. So it appears that the true interpretation of these words gives us not only the reason why Baruch was reader as well as penman, but also why God commanded the prophet to write.

Jeremiah's object in writing, however, is not a matter of doubtful disputation. He had no thought of literary fame, no knowledge of the sacred writings in which in the providence of God his words would find no inconspicuous place; he was concerned with the immediate and pressing problems of his own day. If he could turn the present inhabitants of Judah from their sinful ways, God could be trusted to raise up other men for dealing with the problems which lay beyond his horizon.

Writing was a rare accomplishment in Jeremiah's time.[1] Whether he could handle the pen himself or not, we do not know, and need not care. We are told that he did not write himself, and beyond that we must be content to remain in ignorance.

We know that these prophecies were not written until after their delivery, and many of them very long after their delivery. Any man could gather up a summary of his teaching during past years from memory, if he were a true prophet, zealous for truth; but no man could recall the very words he had used

[1] In enlightened countries now, nearly every person can read and write. In Israel, writing was a profession, known and practised by comparatively few.

in his addresses. To suppose that Jeremiah wrote *verbatim* in the year 605 what he had said in the year 626 and the years intervening, puts a burden upon inspiration which is an unnecessary stumbling-block. The Holy Spirit stirs men to their work, but does not do it for them. We are therefore constrained to infer that Jeremiah reproduced such of his utterances as abided in his memory and were adapted to his present object, in their original substance, but in such form and language as would make them most powerful in their present task. His interest was not archæological, but spiritual.

What we know of Jeremiah's writing gives us the key to the writing of the other prophets. There is evidence in abundance that they, too, did not write in advance. To say nothing of the *a priori* improbability of an ancient prophet standing before the people with a manuscript or a tablet in his hand, or repeating, like a parrot, words already written and learned by heart, there is much direct and conclusive evidence. There are many cases in which they, like Cicero, adapted what they had to say to the conditions under which they were speaking. A few cases will make this point clear.

Amaziah broke in upon Amos while he was relating a series of visions. The prophet turned upon him with an *apologia pro vita sua*, and a prediction concerning the priest which he could scarcely have thought of before, and certainly could not record until after its delivery. Isaiah bids Ahaz ask a great sign which he holds himself ready to give upon the spot, and when the king declines his offer the prophet

pours forth *ex tempore* the wonderful Immanuel prophecy,[1] which has been such a stumbling-block to commentators. Isaiah quotes a wonderfully bright prophecy of Zion's glory, apparently intending it as the text of a hopeful address. But seeing the actual conditions of the people before him, he is turned from his purpose, and pours forth a severe indictment of the faithless and wicked nation.[2]

Jeremiah preached his sermon on the temple, a sermon which brought so much trouble to him, because he heard the people crying "the temple of Jahveh," putting a misplaced trust in God's interest in a sacred place.[3] Watching the potter one day at work with his wheel, he was led to declare that God's work in the world was like the potter's in the clay.[4] When he spent a night in the stocks, Passhur did not furnish him with writing materials, nevertheless Jeremiah was ready in the morning with a prophecy of ominous portent to his persecutor.[5] He was ever prepared to answer on the spot questions which were brought to him from the king.[6] His discourse upon the Rechabites hung upon their refusal to take the wine which he offered them in the presence of the people.[7]

When the elders of Israel came to consult the prophet Ezekiel, in exile in Babylonia, he was always able to give them a message at once.[8] His fine Messianic prophecy of the resurrection of the nation was occasioned by the despondent cry of the exiles:

[1] Isa. vii. [2] Isa. ii. [3] Jer. vii.
[4] Jer. xviii. [5] Jer. xx. [6] *e.g.* Jer. xxi.
[7] Jer. xxxv. [8] *e.g.* Ezek. xiv., xx.

"Our bones are dried up, and our hope is lost; we are clean cut off."[1] The beautiful passage in which a prophet states the requirements of God in a manner never excelled, was due to the anxious inquiries of people who desired to know the will of God.[2]

Haggai's prophecies are largely conversational. He urges the people to set about the rebuilding of the temple. He presses the timeliness of the project because they excuse delay by saying, "The time has not come for Jahveh's house to be built."[3] The disparaging remarks about the new temple lead him to declare that the glory of this house will yet exceed anything which had been known before.[4] The questions he asked the priests in the presence of the people and their answers provided him with suggestions for a prophecy.[5] Malachi, hearing the people ask, "Wherein has God shown His love?" and "Wherein have we polluted Thee?"[6] finds in the answer the message of God to the people. Joel's great Messianic utterance, one of the finest in Holy Writ, was prompted by the magnificent spectacle of the great mass of the people, under the lead of the priests, pouring out their supplications for the exhibition of God's mercy.[7]

The prophet was a man of his times: he was a man promptly to meet emergencies as they arose. He could not be bound down by a cut-and-dried form, but must be quick to seize a chance, and to drive home every advantage he could gain. The

[1] Ezek. xxxvii. 11. [2] Micah vi. 1–8. [3] Hag. i. 2.
[4] Hag. ii. 3 ff. [5] Hag. ii. 12 ff. [6] Mal. i. 2, 7.
[7] Joel ii. 18 ff.

prophets were orators rather than essayists. It must not be inferred, however, that the prophets had the fixed habit of speaking as the Spirit gave them utterance. No modern preacher who loves to trust to *ex tempore* inspiration can find warrant for his indolent habit in the example of the prophets. If they knew how to turn the chance feelings or expressions of their hearers to good account, there is also sufficient testimony to the care with which they usually prepared their messages.

Perhaps the best evidence of all, paradoxical as it may seem, is the very readiness to speak God's word as the moment required. Our Lord counselled His disciples to make no preparation beforehand for their defence when they were brought to trial for His sake. The Spirit would not fail at a critical time the man who had been living in the Spirit always. The nation which is ready for sudden war is the one which has not been idle in time of peace. The man who is best prepared to speak unexpectedly is the one who loses no opportunity to keep the mind full. The prophets were men whose hearts were turned toward God. Their minds were ever bent to comprehend something of the mystery of life. They were earnest in their efforts to solve the problems of God's dealings with His people. They were therefore ready with a message from God when it was needed.

The prophets say nothing about specific preparation for particular prophecies. Who would think of incorporating into a sermon or speech the method of its preparation? In a book it is permissible for an

author to make revelations from the workshop; no such preface is tolerable in a speech. If the discourse does not tell its own story, the hearers will not accept any other evidence. Now the prophecies have the internal witness to careful work. The literary form, the coherence of thought, the fine choice of words, all proclaim the painstaking labour of a conscientious student. No one could easily believe that Isaiah's Song of the Vineyard,[1] or Amos's Arraignment of the Seven Nations,[2] were impromptu efforts.

There is information which, when rightly understood, has a direct bearing on this subject. How often in the prophets we read that God told His messengers to do a certain act, to speak certain words, and then that the messenger did as he was bid. There is more in such cases than a useless and wearying tautology. For example, God directs Elijah to go meet Ahab in the vineyard of Naboth fitly to pronounce his doom on the land obtained by blood and theft.[3] He sends Isaiah and his son to meet Ahab on the spot where the king is studying the problem of water supply, telling him in advance what he is to say.[4] He tells Jeremiah to carry his girdle to the Euphrates, and to let it decay there.[5] He warns Ezekiel that his wife is to die, but bids him abstain from every external mark of grief.[6]

What is the meaning of such directions? We can no longer hold that the prophet was a mere machine, just doing literally as he was bid, without any active

[1] Isa. v. [2] Amos i., ii. [3] 1 Kings xxi. 17 ff.
[4] Isa. vii. [5] Jer. xiii. [6] Ezek. xxiv. 15 ff.

intelligence of his own. Samuel could not have been carrying out Divine orders literally when he told the people that he had come to Bethlehem to offer a sacrifice, when as a matter of fact he had come to inaugurate a revolution against the house of the reigning king. It is easy to believe that Samuel thought that God so counselled him: it is impossible to believe that God actually did so. Moreover, if the prophets were but the mechanical mouthpieces of God, higher critics would have been constrained to give over their attempts at analysis on the basis of literary style.

Yet these directions are not without meaning. The prophet believed that God controlled all of his life, not a small part merely. There was to him no distinction between sacred and profane. There was no division of his life into a part which was God's business, and a part which was his own. His whole life belonged to God, and was guided by God. When therefore he had adopted a certain course of action after due consideration, or went forth to speak a certain message after careful preparation, there was only one way to state the fact to be true to his own conception, and to be understood of the people, and that is just the way he does state the fact, that God told him to do so. Would that every prophet of the Lord Jesus Christ were so to prepare for his work by hard study, earnest meditation, and fervent prayer, that he could feel deeply as he went forth to give the results to the world, that his Master was but sending him on an errand! Then indeed he might realise the high privilege of the service of God. Then he might

comprehend in all its fulness what Jesus meant by placing servantship above mastership.

But the previous preparation of the prophets was not accomplished by the pen, and we are now concerned with their writing. Whatever writing they did certainly followed the delivery of their prophecies. The chief exception, if indeed there be any, is Ezekiel. Some scholars hold that Ezekiel was distinctively the literary prophet, in that his prophecies appeared first in written form. The upholders of this view make little attempt to support it by tangible evidence. It is, in fact, the sort of thing about which one easily forms an opinion from broad general considerations, which it is not easy to prove or disprove by detailed evidence. It does not seem worth while to turn aside and take up this question fully. But if I were to do so, I am persuaded that we should conclude that much of Ezekiel was certainly not written in advance of delivery, and that, with the possible exception of chapters xl.–xlviii., there is no evidence that any of his prophecies were originally issued in written form.

The belief that prophecies were written long after delivery is the only reasonable explanation of a fact which we notice again and again, namely, the presence of historical allusions of different periods. Historical allusion is the easiest and most exact means of determining the date of any writing. But it often happens that we find along with clear historical evidence of a certain date, certain references to a much later time. Such a condition may be explained in three ways. 1. By assigning the prophecies to the later date.

2. By supposing that an editor had interpolated the later references to which he found the text applicable. 3. By holding that the prophets themselves coloured their earlier addresses by allusions to the conditions which were present at the time of writing.

Possibly all three of these methods must be used in the interpretation of prophecy. But that the last is one to which the student must often turn is, I believe, plain to the discerning eye. It seems quite unlikely that the story of Isaiah's call,[1] or Jeremiah's,[2] could have been written as it stands at the time the call was given. There is so much in each story which a prophet could only learn by experience, that we are forced to believe that the record of the call was made as the explanation of that experience. There is a long passage in Jeremiah[3] which seems to belong to the Scythian invasion. Many allusions there have no other such natural fitness as to the wild hordes which swept over the country and seriously threatened Judah. Yet there seem to be equally clear references to a condition belonging to a time some years subsequent.[4] The difficulty is easily removed in this case: for we know that Jeremiah did not write until 605 B.C.; he was not concerned with an exact reproduction of what he had said years before; he wanted a lesson for the present. God had turned back the terrible tide of barbarians, and He could turn back the hosts of Babylon. Jeremiah would naturally adapt his early utterance so as to make it forceful for the present.

[1] Isa. vi. [2] Jer. i. [3] Jer. ii.–vi.

[4] See further, Driver's *Introd.*[6], p. 252 f., and the references there.

That we have most prophecies in an edition later than the delivery, or in substance merely, is undeniably a loss; but the loss is more apparent to the literary than to the religious interest. The moment an author issues a new edition of a book, the value of the old editions becomes little. The student of the Hebrew language finds it difficult and expensive to keep up with the new editions of grammars, lexicons, commentaries, etc. The latest is almost invariably the most valuable; for the final judgment of an author is preferred to superseded opinions. The same principle applies to the prophets. The written issue of their prophecies bears the stamp of their ripest judgment. If we had Jeremiah's prophecies about the Scythians in their original form, doubtless they would be of greater historical value than the existing collection; but we should not have the final judgment of the prophet. If the prophets in reducing their utterances to writing improved the form, that is wholly a gain. Jeremiah was the author of his prophecies in written form. Baruch is careful to tell most explicitly that he wrote them from the mouth of the prophet: the scribe was a mere amanuensis.[1]

It is highly probable that this was the case with the other prophets as well. We have a good test of this in the case of Isaiah. Some of the prophets we know only from history; others we know only from

[1] Duhm is doubtless in the main right in ascribing the historical parts of Jeremiah to Baruch, though he goes pretty far at times. Jeremiah probably dictated the prophecies, and Baruch himself wrote the historical settings.

their own works. Isaiah we know from both. Chapters xxxvi.–xxxix. are incorporated bodily in his book from history, because the history deals so much with the prophet, and the bringing together of all sacred books into a single volume was not dreamed of in the days of Isaiah. In these historical sections we find many of Isaiah's utterances reported. They have usually a genuine ring. They are worthy of the great prophet, and are fit expressions of his power. But in style they differ considerably from the prophecies in his book. Though coming from the same lips, they are the record of a different pen. The historian—not the compiler of Kings, but the original author whose work he embodies—wrote Isaiah's words from memory. He knew in substance the great sayings of Isaiah at these critical moments. But the words of Isaiah are coloured by passing through his mind, so that while the thoughts are clearly Isaianic, the literary form is not. This difference is most naturally explained by the supposition that the prophecies of Isaiah, as found in his book, are the product of his own hand.

The prophecies bear the earmarks of oral discourse. They are never transformed to the form of religious essays. They have this witness to the fidelity of their reproduction. They are invariably in the form of direct address. This fact of itself means little, for many histories contain manufactured speeches given in the form of direct address. In Samuel and Kings the prophets are usually quoted in direct address. But there is a great difference between the invented and the genuine. In reading a prophecy we feel the

audience present. Either the authors were literary artists of the highest order, or the words are a faithful reproduction of a message from the prophet's lips. They bear the mark of the former so plainly that we can easily believe, on this ground alone, that they were not written out in advance of delivery. They often bear the imprint of the circumstances of their delivery. By their own hand, or by the office of a scribe, shortly after delivery in some cases, long after in others, the messages of the prophets were put in written form.

The purpose so clearly stated by Jeremiah, as quoted above, is the purpose of God, and it does not vary in different cases. The written word was to serve the same purpose as the oral word. When writing was once in vogue, the prophet could enlarge his ministry by the use of the pen. A prophet of the Christian dispensation began to write with the same object, though his writing was not intended as a reproduction of his speeches. St. Paul was a restless traveller; as soon as a fair foundation was laid in one place, he was eager to carry the Gospel to a new field. But there were quick departures from his standard. He could not always be going back to correct and confirm. But he could write, and the wonderful collection of his Epistles bears witness to St. Paul's desire to extend the area of his apostleship as widely as possible.

Occasionally the purpose of writing pointed to the future, though generally the prophet was concerned with the pressing needs of the hour. The wonderful timeliness of his utterances is one of the most marked

traits of the Hebrew prophet. But his outlook was, nevertheless, broad; in fact, his farsightedness was a great source of power for his work of the moment. He can best prescribe the duty for to-day who knows what to-morrow will be. No statesman can be truly great who does not see the inevitable issue of present conditions and handle them with reference to the future. There were times when the prophets seemed ready to drop consideration of the hopeless present, buried in gloom, and to turn their eyes to the glorious future in which they steadfastly believed, and in which every child of God must believe. Sometimes their writing had reference to that remote future.

Jeremiah wrote his glowing picture of the future[1] in the tenth year of Zedekiah, 587 B.C. He was at the time a prisoner in the court of the guard:[2] it was the darkest period of Hebrew history; for the fall of the holy city was so certain and so near that the prophet ceases to regard it, and looks beyond to a new day. Jeremiah was commanded to write in a book all the words that God had spoken to him.[3] The words to be written were these fine Messianic chapters which had come from this time of national anguish. The purpose of reducing to writing is clearly stated: "For lo, the days are coming, saith Jahveh, when I will bring back the captivity of My people Israel and Judah; and I will restore them to the land which I gave to their fathers."[4] The written words were to be preserved and read as an evidence of God's gracious purpose to restore the nation,

[1] Jer. xxx.–xxxiii.
[2] Jer. xxxii. 2.
[3] Jer. xxx. 2.
[4] Jer. xxx. 3.

which was now speeding to destruction. Through the dark days of exile and humiliation the bright words of the prophet would serve to cheer the spirits of the depressed, and bid them look hopefully for better times.

Habakkuk also was commanded to take up the pen: "Write the vision and engrave it upon tablets, that he may run who reads it; for the vision is for a set time, and it hastens to the end; and it shall not lie."[1] The reason seems to be similar to Jeremiah's. The condition described by the prophet, the overthrow of the wicked power of Babylon, was near, but not present. Yet it would surely come, and the prediction of its coming was to console the people suffering in the interim.

Isaiah was commanded to write a brief prophecy on a tablet; it was this: *maher shalal hash baz*, "swift the spoil, speedy the prey."[2] The words were a prediction of the overthrow of the combined powers of Damascus and Samaria, before which Judah was quailing, and the fear of which drove Ahaz to the disastrous alliance with Assyria. Isaiah seems to have set up the tablet in the presence of witnesses, as a testimony for the future day, when the development of time should establish the truth of his words. So Isaiah wrote for the future to prove the uselessness of the reliance upon Egypt. The command to him was, "Now go, write it upon a tablet before them, and upon a book inscribe it, that it may be for a future day, for a witness for ever."[3]

Our conclusions, then, about the writing prophets

[1] Hab. ii. 2 f. [2] Isa. viii. 3. [3] Isa. xxx. 8.

agree with what we should on general principles deem most probable. These prophets wrote or dictated their own prophecies sometimes shortly after delivery, sometimes long after.[1] They are not *verbatim* reports of speeches as delivered, but are sometimes modified to suit the purpose of their issue in written form. These conclusions will fit the case of many of the prophecies preserved in the Hebrew Scriptures. They may not apply to all cases. Sometimes there seems to be a condition best explained by supposing that a prophecy has been either recorded from the uncertain memory of one who heard it, or revised by a less skilful and faithful hand than the author. A critical discrimination is always essential in our study. But we are safe in assuming that the genuine productions of the writing prophets are peculiarly trustworthy as sources of information for our use. In turning to them we are dealing with authorities of the highest order.

[1] See additional note (9).

CHAPTER VIII

THE PROPHET'S RELATION TO THE STATE

I. BEFORE AMOS

THE civil ruler among the ancient Semites was in many respects a despot of the most arbitrary kind. His rule was based on the doctrine of the Divine right of kings, and he at least was convinced that the king could do no wrong. Nevertheless his practice was considerably influenced by the fact that he was intensely religious, even though his religion may seem to us, in the case of some of the kings, of the grossest type. Believing in the gods, he felt that success in his career depended upon their good pleasure. Hence he strove always to keep in favour with them, so that every enterprise might be undertaken under their favourable auspices. To that end it was necessary to know the mind of the gods, for that information was equivalent to the knowledge of the ways of success and failure.

There were many means employed to determine the will of the gods: dreams, divination, magic, soothsaying, sorcery, witchcraft, all had their place. Among many of the ancient Semitic peoples the method of ascertaining the Divine will never rose

above divination. In the sixth century before Christ, Nebuchadrezzar still decides by arrows and the convulsions of the slain animal's liver, whether the gods would have him take the road to Rabbah or Jerusalem.[1]

Among the Hebrews all the primitive methods were in use at various periods. Jonathan decided to attack the Philistine garrison because, according to his prearranged sign, they said, "Come up to us," instead of "Tarry until we come to you."[2] Shortly afterwards Saul, desiring to know whether it was a favourable time to attack, summoned the priest to divine with the ephod.[3] In the same way David learned, first, that he should attack the Philistines who were besieging Keilah, and later, that he must abandon Keilah to escape treachery.[4] In his great distress, when he was hard pressed by the Philistines, Saul failed to get a satisfactory answer

[1] Ezek. xxi. 18 ff. See also art. "Soothsayer," by Whitehouse, in Hastings' *Bible Dictionary*.

[2] 1 Sam. xiv. 9 f.

[3] 1 Sam. xiv. 18 ff. The Hebrew text reads, "bring hither the ark of God." The best Greek versions read, "bring hither the ephod." There seems to be no question but that the latter is right. The ark was not used for divination, the ephod was. Ahijah was present in the camp of Saul "wearing an ephod" (1 Sam. xiv. 3). Later on David used the same words to Abiathar, "bring hither the ephod" (*ib.* xxiii. 9; cf. also xxx. 7, and Driver's Notes on the Hebrew text of Samuel, p. 83 f.). The change in the Hebrew text was accidental; the words for ark and ephod are much alike; after this error came in, "of God" was added as a necessary explanation.

[4] 1 Sam. xxiii. This instance is particularly instructive because we find a detailed conversation between David and Jahveh, but conducted through the ephod. David asked his questions, and the oracular yes or no was given in reply. The true explanation of the earlier part of the story (vers. 1–5), where the ephod is not mentioned, is thus supplied.

from any other source, and so resorted to necromancy.[1]

But the Hebrews did not always depend upon the dark arts for determining the moment which was auspicious by the favour of God. Comparatively early in their career they learned a better and higher way. The counsel of God came to them, not through the uncertainties of dreams and divination, but through the voice of the living prophets. Thus the Hebrew prophet in his relation to the State was accorded a position of tremendous power, and was given a chance for the religious enlightenment of the people. The attitude of Nebuchadrezzar, following the falling of the arrows and the movements of a liver, is not unlike that of David moving to the attack at the rustling of the mulberry trees; but it is very different from Hezekiah, stoutly resisting the assaults of Sennacherib under the influence of the confident cry of a great prophet: "The virgin daughter of Zion hath despised thee, and laughed thee to scorn; the daughter of Jerusalem hath shaken her head at thee."[2]

At first the man was nothing apart from his apparatus. Abiathar the priest would have been little esteemed by David without the sacred ephod. Moses could do nothing without his divining rod. The early seers may have used some similar primitive methods of learning the will of God. Samuel the seer may have determined that the asses were found

[1] 1 Sam. xxviii. An unusual procedure, but not unknown at a much later age, as we learn from Isa. viii. 19.

[2] Isa. xxxvii. 22.

by the art of soothsaying.[1] But in the development of prophecy the man came into direct communion with God, and all apparatus was laid aside.[2] With the appearance of great men, the belief grew among the people that Jahveh spoke directly to His prophets.[3] The Hebrew kings and counsellors might, if they would, have a more certain assurance that they were walking in the way of God than the dark arts permitted. When the kings looked to the seers for guidance from on high, these became inevitably great figures in the State. To fill his place the prophet must be not only a man of God, but a statesman as well. For he was no blind medium, but an intelligent transmitter of the Divine counsel. He was a man of his times, looking about him with clear sight, knowing not only the political movements of his day, but their significance for the time and for the future. So it happened that the prophet cannot be understood apart from his connexion with the State.[4] We

[1] The use of apparatus would be maintained after it had ceased to be a guide to the seer, because of its impressive effect upon the people. Sir Henry Rawlinson had learned as well where to look for a commemoration tablet in a Babylonian building as we should for a cornerstone. Excavating at Birs, he reached the point where he expected the cylinder. Before removing the last bricks he adjusted a prismatic compass on the wall, then removed the brick and picked out the cylinder. The Arabs thought the compass a wonderful instrument, and attributed the find to magic. (See Hilprecht, *Explorations in Bible Lands*, p. 183 f.)

[2] The use of symbols, such as Jeremiah's yoke, was a survival of the old customs.

[3] Amos iii. 7.

[4] "From the days of Samuel onwards we find the prophets standing in the closest relations to the political circumstances of their times. . . . They made it their business to watch the course of national affairs in general, and specially to control and judge the conduct of the reigning monarch and his counsellors" (Ottley, *Bamp. Lect.*, p. 279).

shall trace that relation in its historical development. To this end we must go back to the early days and review the history of prophecy from the political point of view. We shall thus see how the early seer worked for the State's welfare; confessedly, though, our information is at times pretty scanty.

Ehud, the left-handed Benjamite, was not a prophet, but a shrewd warrior, such as the times called for when his tribe was oppressed by Eglon, the king of Moab. Ehud was delegated to carry the tribute to the suzerain, and resolved to make use of the opportunity to rid his people of the tyrant. It was easy to get a private audience with the king by pretending that he had a secret message, for mankind ever loves a secret. But as he desired the fat king to stand, that he might aim the blow more effectively, he accomplished his purpose by saying that his message was from God.[1] Though Ehud was a foreigner from the Moabite's point of view, his pretension to have a message from God to deliver sufficed to gain the attention of the king, and to bring him to his feet. This incident shows the esteem in which any man was held who claimed to have a message from heaven. Ehud the Hebrew was able positively to count upon the Moabite king's welcome to one assuming to bear a Divine commission.

The tolerance of kings towards prophets has often been noted. A raving dervish may gain admission to a despotic Oriental court when an important ambassador would be debarred. Among the Israelites

[1] Judges iii. 20.

it is generally assumed that the prophet had a free hand, and not only dared, but was permitted, a freedom of speech which would have been quickly punished in another. Often his hand was free. That was ever the ideal. Zedekiah is charged with great wrong because he did not humble himself before Jeremiah.[1] But it is easy to exaggerate this tolerance; for conditions varied greatly at different times. There are many cases showing the clearest intolerance towards the prophets. The king of Israel lent his aid to the priest in an effort to dismiss from the kingdom the first of the literary prophets. There is a long story of repression and persecution, which shows that the prophet who opposed the royal policy did so at the risk of liberty and life. The details of this story will be brought out in the course of our study.

Among the very earliest writings preserved by the Hebrews is the Song of Deborah.[2] This ancient poem affords a striking picture of the prophetic influence in early Israel. The northern tribes had been sorely beset by Sisera, and there was no one to gather an effective force in opposition until Deborah arose a mother in Israel, and inspired Barak to rally the people and lead them in a fierce assault against the foe. The prophetess did not wait for someone to seek her counsel, but, acting under a Divine impulse of patriotism, herself took the initial steps which led to the expulsion of the enemy.

That position of leadership was ever maintained by the prophets. They were never passive instru-

[1] 2 Chron. xxxvi. 12. [2] Judges v.

ments of divination to say yes or no, when the springs were touched by an inquiring hand, but were active in arousing the people to their God-given opportunities. Thus the great seer of Ephraim is introduced to us in the oldest story of the establishment of the kingdom.[1] Samuel sees the disadvantage of Israel in their tribal jealousy and disorganisation.[2] The time has gone by when heroic leaders may be expected as occasion requires. The people had seen enough of the evil of a state of anarchy to enable Samuel to count upon their acceptance of the new institution if it is presented to them at a fitting moment. The young giant who comes to the seer to inquire about the strayed asses has all the marks of the kind of leader the people of that age would be likely to follow; and therefore upon the head of the son of Kish the anointing oil is poured.

If Samuel had occupied the commanding position ascribed to him in the later narratives of the Book of Samuel, nothing more than this anointing would have been necessary to have finally established the kingdom. But as Samuel appears to have been at all events at the start a seer of Ephraim, with little more than local repute,[3] the pouring of oil upon a man's head would command little heed from the people at large. Therefore Saul must demonstrate

[1] 1 Sam. ix.

[2] This is a vastly more probable explanation of the origin of the kingdom than the other version of the story (1 Sam. viii., xii.), according to which Samuel grudgingly yielded to a popular demand.

[3] Whatever may be the fact in regard to Samuel's position, the above is assuredly the view of the writer of the early story of the founding of the kingdom.

his leadership by watching his opportunity, by following the seer's counsel to "do as occasion shall serve." [1] The prophet's part was to make choice of a fit person to serve in the high office of king; the king's part was to demonstrate the fitness of that choice when the occasion arose. The seer wisely contents himself with a general direction; Saul finds the opportunity himself when he hears of the dire stress of Jabesh-gilead. It is often erroneously assumed, on the basis of the later stories, that Samuel was the real authority in the kingdom, and Saul but a figure-head carrying out his instructions. This conception is far from the truth; for later we read that Jonathan, of his own initiative, determined by signs, and Saul by the ephod, when to attack the enemy. Samuel as a matter of fact occupied an inconspicuous position in the monarchy which he had inspired.

According to the Book of Samuel, the prophet not only set up a king, but he also put him down, when his services were not deemed sufficiently pleasing to Jahveh. The critical problems in these sources are pretty difficult. But they must be faced. Between those who reject everything except the oldest narrative and those who accept the whole as equally authoritative in all parts, smoothing out the inconsistencies with greater skill than success, there may not be much choice. The practice of considering every statement impossible, because found in a late source, is reprehensible; that of accepting every statement because it is found in Holy Scripture is impossible. Every statement ought to be judged on

[1] 1 Sam. x. 7.

its own merits. It seems scarcely likely, however, that Saul was deposed from the throne for offering a sacrifice before the priest-prophet appeared;[1] and this story is inconsistent with another ground for Saul's rejection, namely, his failure to exterminate the Amalekites.[2] The latter story is much more in accord with the ideas of the times, and probably gives the real cause of Samuel's disaffection.[3]

What part Samuel had in the revolution by which David reached the throne, it is not easy to say. The information is not always consistent, and the most specific is the latest and least trustworthy.[4] But it is highly probable that there is this much of historic truth back of these stories, that David was prompted by the seer of Ephraim to overthrow the house of Saul, and to set up his own dynasty in its place.

It is interesting to note that in all the later sources of the Book of Samuel, the place of the prophet is much more conspicuous than in the early sources. Looked at from the point of view of the later times, it was inconceivable that Samuel had been other than the power behind the throne directing the king in all his ways. We find the same tendency in the history of David's reign. In the latest source the power of the prophet appears to be greatest. The story of the king's consultation with Nathan about the building of the temple is one of the latest additions to the narrative.[5] The most despotic king, according to

[1] 1 Sam. xiii. 8 ff. [2] 1 Sam. xv. [3] See additional note (10).

[4] *i.e.* 1 Sam. xvi. 1–13. Budde has so poor an opinion of this section that he regards it as a midrash, taken from the same source quoted by the Chronicler (*Bücher Samuel*, p. 114).

[5] 2 Sam. vii

that story, dare not carry out a project long cherished in his heart without the sanction of the prophet. If we question this story we must do so, however, not merely on the ground of lateness of source, but chiefly upon the improbability that a man like David would brook such interference.

David seems to have had little to do with the prophets. According to the oldest sources, his inquiries of God were apparently made through the priest and ephod, which had served him so well in the days of his conflict with Saul.[1] In the list of his officers[2] we find two priests, but no prophet. When the king was obliged to flee on account of Absalom's rebellion, Zadok the priest was with him, but there is no mention of a prophet. Hushai the councillor was relied upon for advice, and was deliberately counselled to aid the fugitive king by deceiving the usurper. According to Chronicles, when the elders of Israel came to Hebron to make David king, they acted "according to the word of Jahveh by the hand of Samuel";[3] but that assertion sounds like a harmonistic effort of the Chronicler. It is in agreement with the later conceptions.

Still we find even in these oldest sources that the prophets do sometimes appear on the scene and speak with the utmost freedom, even though their mission was to rebuke a king. Nathan's severe censure of David for the high-handed crimes by which Bath-sheba became his wife, reveals an early picture of the true prophet's high courage, and his solid

[1] 2 Sam. ii. 1; v. 19; xxi. 1. [2] 2 Sam. viii. 16–18.
[3] 1 Chron. xi. 3.

moral principles. That the State may be strong, it must be pure. A dissolute, unscrupulous monarch is intolerable to Jahveh, and the prophet, full of the spirit of Jahveh, cannot hesitate to lay bare the king's sins, and to declare the punishment which will inevitably follow.[1]

Another prophet, who is called a royal seer, was the divinely appointed means of conveying to the king the choice of punishments offered him in expiation of his sin in taking a census.[2] This story is not free from difficulty for the interpreter. But we may easily separate it into certain historic facts on the one side, and the theological interpretation of those facts on the other. The facts seem to be that for military purposes David ordered a census of the whole people; and that this census was followed by a dreadful pestilence. In accordance with the ideas of the times, the pestilence could only be explained as a punishment for sin, as indeed all pestilences are, though unhappily the right sin is not always discovered. But the writer of this old story makes the prophet Gad the messenger to the offending king, and the agent by whose advice the stay of the plague is accomplished.

[1] H. P. Smith is doubtful about this narrative. "There is nothing unreasonable in supposing that the early narrative was content with pointing out that the anger of Jahveh was evidenced by the death of the child. A later writer was not satisfied with this, but felt that there must be a specific rebuke by a direct revelation" (*Sam.*, p. 322). The question is whether there is anything unreasonable in the narrative as it stands. That there may be some later embellishments in the story is possible; that a whole section has been added from an untrustworthy source is not very likely.

[2] 2 Sam. xxiv.

It would be unreasonable to suppose that these two notices tell us the whole history of prophecy in relation to the reign of David. They are rather to be regarded as evidence that, apart from the sons of the prophets as bodies, there were conspicuous individual prophets, who watched the course of "the king after God's own heart," and though not called in counsel in affairs of state, were yet quick to appear of their own motion, when they perceived the king to be falling from the ways of their God.

If we look over such history as we have of the oppressive reign of Solomon the great, we are struck at once with the absence of any mention of prophets. In the list of his officers[1] we find priests, but neither seer nor prophet. There is no record of Solomon's ever consulting a seer, or being sharply called to account by a prophet. In fact, Solomon was not a man to take censure from anybody. All the knowledge we have of him points to a man of self-sufficiency. Wisdom came to him directly from God, so it was believed, and he felt no dependence upon a mediating officer.

At the same time Solomon could not have forgotten that he owed his office to the shrewdness of a prophet. Nathan seems to have been the first to penetrate the treacherous purposes of Adonijah, and the first to suggest a means to counteract the effects of David's inactivity and rapidly waning popularity. The prophet was concerned to secure the succession of the heir-apparent as determined by royal authority. Yet the actual anointing was done by Zadok the

[1] 1 Kings iv. ff.

priest, not by Nathan the prophet.[1] It is highly probable that Nathan lived through a part of Solomon's reign, but he could have had no conspicuous place in the royal councils.

There is good indirect evidence that Solomon did not look kindly upon prophetic meddling with his great affairs; this we find in the history of Ahijah the Shilonite. Ahijah saw the evil consequences of an attempt, such as Solomon had made, to maintain a splendid Oriental court in a nation as small and poor as Israel. In the heir-apparent the seer could perceive no signs of improvement. The only course, therefore, was a revolt and a secession of the northern tribes from the united kingdom, and the establishment of a royal line of their own. This dangerous business was executed in the wild mountain land,[2] where the seer would not be under the observation of royal spies.

It was a prophet, therefore, who inspired the greatest rebellion in Hebrew history. The part of the prophet in such movements was to pick out the man for the occasion, and to set him at the arduous and perilous work of revolution. While Solomon lived, the prophet dare not interfere with the evils which he deprecated, nor did he venture to stir up revolt. Under the feebler rule of Solomon's son, revolution became possible.

[1] So we are expressly told in 1 Kings i. 39. David commands Zadok and Nathan to anoint Solomon king (ver. 34), and Jonathan reported to the conspirators that Zadok and Nathan had anointed him (ver. 45). Nathan may have had some part in the function, but Zadok was evidently the chief.

[2] 1 Kings xi. 29. The rendering of the English versions, "field," conveys quite a wrong impression.

Another prophet played an important rôle in this revolution. Rehoboam was as conceited as arrogant, and vainly supposed that he could bring back his revolted subjects by force of arms. A protracted attempt to do so would have resulted in great loss of property and life, and probably in the entire destruction of the Davidic kingdom. Rehoboam gathered a great army, but was halted in his purpose by Shemaiah, the man of God, who persuaded the king that the division of the kingdom was of God.[1] It would have been useless to try to stay the king's hand by predicting failure; but the plea that the rebellion he purposed to suppress was of Divine ordering proved effective.

How exactly reversed are conditions now! A government will be very much influenced by probabilities of success or failure, but very little effort will be made to learn the will of God. It may indeed be urged that we have no longer a prophet to announce authoritatively, "thus saith the Lord." But we have a surer means than an Ahijah or a Shemaiah had for determining the will of God. For the party which is in the right is that which God looks upon with favour, and not the party with the heaviest battalions; though

[1] 1 Kings xii. 21 ff. Kittel says this narrative is a later addition, and sounds like a friendly excuse for Rehoboam's inaction and indifference (*Hist.*, ii. 211, 246). He regards it as a post-exilic midrash after the manner of the Chronicler (*Königsbücher*, 106). It is true that Rehoboam kept up a sort of border war for a long time; it is so expressly stated in 1 Kings xiv. 30; but it may be that this passage, however late, contains a bit of true history, namely, that the king refrained from a great war by prophetic advice. The border war he could not control, even if he had cared to stop it.

it is unhappily not always the case in war that right makes might.

Whatever Shemaiah's position at court was, he evidently wielded a great influence in the affairs of state. It was no light task to turn back a king when his forces were already mustered for war. The prophet appears once again in the character of a state counsellor, though in a matter more distinctly religious. In the fifth year of Rehoboam's reign Judah was invaded by Shishak, the king of Egypt. To the king and princes wondering at the havoc wrought in Jahveh's land, the prophet gives the easy explanation: "Thus saith Jahveh: you have abandoned Me, and therefore have I abandoned you in the hand of Shishak."[1]

Again Rehoboam accepted the counsel of the man of God, and as a consequence of his humility, a comforting message was given to him: "They have humbled themselves: I will not destroy them, but I will shortly make them an escaped remnant, and My anger shall not be poured upon Jerusalem by the hand of Shishak. Yet they shall become servants to him, that they may know My service, and the service of the kingdoms of the lands."[2]

The plain meaning of this advice in modern terms seems to be this. The feeble Judean army had no chance against the vastly superior Egyptian force.

[1] 2 Chron. xii. 5. There is no mention of Shemaiah's appearance in the brief story in 1 Kings xiv. 25 ff. While we must admit that the Chronicler's unsupported testimony must be cautiously scrutinised, it nevertheless seems uncritical to reject it *en masse*. He had no especial predilection in favour of the prophets.

[2] 2 Chron. xii. 7 f.

To resist such a power meant destruction. The only wise course for the weaker side was submission for a time, not vain resistance, which would only aggravate the trouble. Shemaiah, the man of God, was the one who saw the course of safety, and who was able to pilot the frail State of Judah through the troubled waters.

We know little more of prophetic activity in the State for a long time. The Chronicler tells us that Azariah the son of Obed tried to keep Asa in the straight path by reminding him that Jahveh's favour was conditional upon good behaviour.[1] About the same time Jehu the son of Hanani sharply rebuked Baasha, the third king of Israel, and declared that his rule would fall to the ground because of the sins he had committed.[2] It is highly probable[3] that this same seer played an active part in the overthrow of the discredited dynasty of Jeroboam, and the passing of the reins to the powerful hand of Omri.

The disastrous war between Amaziah of Judah and Joash of Israel was brought about, according to the Chronicler, by partly following and partly ignoring the advice of a prophet. The king of Judah hired Israelitish mercenaries to aid him in a campaign against Edom. A man of God advised against this accession so strongly that Amaziah sent the Israelites back as a consequence. While the Judeans were plundering Edom, the returning Israelites seized the opportunity to find redress in looting the Judeans.

[1] 2 Chron. xv. 1 ff. [2] 1 Kings xvi. 1 ff.

[3] Some such activity seems to be implied in the language of 1 Kings xvi. 2–7; cf. also xv. 29, xiv. 14.

Amaziah was reproved by the prophets, according to the story, because he worshipped the captured deities of Edom; but probably the real ground of the rebuke was the king's proposal to exact vengeance from Israel. Then we come to a case of conflict between prophet and king. The king asked the seer, "Have we made thee of the king's counsel?" and follows his question with a grave threat, "forbear: why shouldst thou be smitten?" Though we are told that the prophet heeded the threat, he did so with the real spirit of the prophets, which was to bid defiance to any other authority than God's: "I know that God has determined to destroy thee because thou hast done this, and hast not hearkened unto my counsel." [1]

We must go back a little now to a time when the prophet was a prominent figure in the State, to the time of Elijah and Elisha. Conditions at this period were very bad from the point of view of a prophet of Jahveh. The dynasty of Omri was anything but faithful to Jahveh's ways. The kings were no longer amenable to prophetic counsel, and the seers were constrained to sit constantly on the opposition bench. This was a time, too, when the king was intolerant of what seemed to him as prophetic interference with affairs of state. Like others in civil authority whose life is not above reproach, he would insist that the pulpit keep close to a narrow range of religion and let business and politics alone. In spite of intolerance and persecution, however, the great prophets had their say, and, like true watchmen, did not let

[1] 2 Chron. xxv. 1–16.

Israel rush on to its doom without lifting up their voice in warning.

It is only possible to state briefly some of the prophet's acts, selecting those which are most important for our subject. While it is true that considerable legendary matter has become imbedded in the stories of Elijah, and more still in those of Elisha, there is yet an abundance of good historical material. This is particularly the case in such parts of the stories as are serviceable for our present purpose. Though not trustworthy in all details, this narrative doubtless gives the position of the prophet correctly.

Elijah comes on the scene very abruptly in 1 Kings xvii., declaring to Ahab that there shall be neither dew nor rain except at his word. Apparently the compiler chose from the history of Elijah such events as threw most light on the history of Israel. Certain it seems, doubtless as a result of this method of selection, that Elijah's chief concern is the State. The welfare of the State in the mind of the prophet depended upon its faithfulness to Jahveh. Consequently the prophet, fired with a religious zeal rarely excelled in history, gave his life so far as we know to an effort to stay the evil tendency towards the introduction of a religion foreign to that upon which the Hebrew nation was founded, and vastly inferior as a moral power.

The prophet's declaration that there would be neither dew nor rain except at his word did not arise from a mere arbitrary desire to display power or to inflict suffering, but was the initial step in his programme to awaken the people to a sense of their

infidelity. When the king and people, feeling the heavy hand of God, humbled themselves penitently, then the dew and rain would fall again as a token of Jahveh's gracious forgiveness.

The result was quite contrary to the prophet's purpose and hope. Jezebel had perhaps already been striving to make Baal the national God. She was as shrewd as she was unscrupulous, and saw her opportunity in the drought which followed Elijah's prediction. She could easily persuade the man who had quite yielded to her dominating influence, that the way to break the drought was to break the man who was responsible for it, and along with him the whole body of his followers. Consequently we find Elijah in hiding and the king doing everything in his power to find him; while the king's officer Obadiah had concealed some of the persecuted prophets, and was secretly maintaining them in a cave. There were probably many hundred other prophets, however, who found neither protector nor hiding-place, but were ruthlessly slain. The prophets at this period, working for the welfare of the State, were violently opposed and persecuted by the king.

The great sacrifice on Mount Carmel, so finely described in 1 Kings xviii., was largely an appeal to the people on the part of the prophet. The king had shown no disposition to interpret correctly the hand of God in the history of his own times. The court of last resort is the people, and this appeal may succeed even under the most despotic government. The true conception of this great effort only appears when we realise that Elijah's purpose was neither the

working of a miracle nor the exhibition of prophetic power, but the saving of the people of God. He seemed to accomplish his object. The immediate result of the complete failure of the Baal prophets to meet the hard conditions imposed, and his own triumphant success, was that the people cried those words sweeter than any music to Elijah's ears, "Jahveh, He is God; Jahveh, He is God."

Elijah was quick to see and take his chances. Mild treatment was not fitted for such rough times. A decisive blow must be struck while the iron was hot. Baal must taste some of Jezebel's own medicine. The prophet who had just emerged from hiding, and was still in danger of his life, the king probably being present, assumes high governmental powers in the name of his God, and orders the immediate execution of the whole body of the prophets of Baal.

The result of the slaughter of these prophets was the awful oath of Jezebel to take Elijah's life. Once more he fled, no longer to a refuge near by, but out of the kingdom, far away to the wilderness of Judah, where he yields to despair and prays for the very thing which would surely have come without petition to heaven had he remained within Jezebel's reach. Notwithstanding the great manifestation of Jahveh's power and the mark of His favour, at the overthrow of the prophets of Baal, in the fall of copious rains, the evil influence of the queen was dominant, and the people quickly followed the lead of their sovereign. The great work was all undone in a moment. What was the use struggling against such fearful odds? The usefulness of the prophet had gone. "Let it now

suffice, O Jahveh," he cries in the bitterness of his soul, "take away my life; for I succeed no better than my fathers."[1]

But Elijah reckoned without a comprehension of God's perseverance in a forlorn hope. Not easily does God abandon His purpose to save His people. When one means fails it is displaced by another, but the gracious purpose of God has never wavered from the time of Eve's disobedience to this day. Ahab was a hopeless failure, but a king is too frail to stand long as an obstacle in the way of God's good purposes towards His people. Kings rise and fall, but the redemptive work of God goes on for ever. From his very despair comes the light, not in the tempest nor the earthquake, but in the clear plan formulated in his own mind, which he rightly sees to be the inspiration of heaven: "Do thou anoint Hazael to be king of Aram; and Jehu the son of Nimshi shalt thou anoint to be king of Israel; and Elisha, the son of Shaphat of Abel-meholah, shalt thou anoint as prophet to succeed thee."[2]

To strip this incident of its Oriental and prophetic colouring and to state the event in modern terms is not impossible, nor does it lead us away from the truth. Elijah had tried, as it seemed to him, every means to bring the people back to God, but he was always thwarted by the court. In the course of his disconsolate meditations in the desert a new suggestion comes to him to strike higher than the deluded prophets who felt constrained to do as they were bid, and to reach the throne itself. Revolutions in two

[1] 1 Kings xix. 4. [2] 1 Kings xix. 15 f.

States were required, and the appointment and training of one worthy to follow his own footsteps, that the great task might not flag for lack of inspired suggestions and unwearying oversight. This new programme seemed to the disheartened refugee like a fresh voice from heaven; and who dare say that he was mistaken? The task now entered upon was difficult and dangerous, and many years elapsed before it was brought to completion. However favoured of heaven, the leaven must do its work in its own tedious way, for God is not wont to send twelve legions of angels to the succour of His travailing servants.

The relations of Syria and Israel were so close and, at the same time, so hostile, that the fortunes and peace of Israel depended no little upon the conditions in Damascus. When the revolution referred to above was finally effected at the instigation of Elisha, the change then boded no good to Israel. Whether the long delay defeated the purpose, or Elijah was mistaken in his man, we cannot say. But Elisha, though loyally carrying out the instructions of his master, saw at the time of his anointing that Hazael would be a serious danger to Israel.[1]

It seemed, too, that the bloody times could only be changed by a man who would be as unscrupulous in

[1] 2 Kings viii. 12. This narrative is not from the same hand as the instructions to Elijah in 1 Kings xix. 15 f., and some writers hold that there is no connexion between the two. It seems to me reasonable to believe that Elijah was unable to effect the revolution and transmitted the unfinished task to his successor; just as David turned over to Solomon the avenging of his own wrongs, because he had been unable to redress them himself.

shedding blood for Jahveh as Ahab and Jezebel had been in shedding it for Baal. Jehu had already a reputation which indicated that he was the man to meet the situation. It is significant of the man's character that he was recognised at a distance by his furious driving of his chariot.[1]

It was essential that there should be a champion of Jahveh in the times of stress which were sure to come. Elijah was growing old. He could not endure the strain much longer, even if he did not fall a prey to the persistent seeking for his life. As we shall presently see, the milder-tempered Elisha was well adapted to the work.

Meanwhile, Ahab played right into the hands of the one whom, for better reasons than he yet knew, he called his enemy. So far Elijah had fallen foul of Ahab on account of his departure from true worship. Now he lights upon him for a flagrant offence in morals. The prophet is guided to Ahab, and finds him red-handed with the murder of Naboth. The seer's clear moral sense is not confused because Ahab could plead, as an extenuation of the crime, that Jezebel had been the author of the ingenious plan, and that a regularly constituted court had pronounced the death sentence upon one convicted of blasphemy. The king coveted the land of Naboth, and sat stupidly by while his more clever queen executed the black plot. But Ahab was the real culprit, and the prophet seizes the chance fearlessly to pronounce his doom: "Hast thou killed, and also taken possession? In the place where dogs

[1] 2 Kings ix. 20.

licked the blood of Naboth shall dogs lick thy blood."[1]

It is refreshing to find in this time, when the great prophet's ardent desire to serve the State brought him into constant conflict with the powers that be, that other prophets found themselves able to give comfort and aid to Ahab in the campaigns against the Syrians. The king of Israel was roused to resistance by the insulting and humiliating terms which Ben-hadad proposed. A prophet, whose name is unknown, but whom the compiler may have assumed to be Elijah, declared that Ahab would conquer, and advised him how to set the battle in array.[2] In another campaign, a man of God, stung by the reproach that Jahveh was a god of the hills but not of the valleys, foretells to Ahab another great victory.[3] But not for long could a man with a grain of wisdom approve the course of this king. Ahab was proud of his triumph, and gladly spared Ben-hadad, trusting foolishly to a treaty, which the Syrian would be ready enough to break when the opportunity should come.[4] The prophet declared that Ahab's life and the life of his people would pay the penalty of his ill-advised clemency. It is not strange that the petulant king returned to his house heavy and displeased.[5]

[1] 1 Kings xxi. 19. [2] 1 Kings xx. 13 ff. [3] 1 Kings xx. 28.

[4] Paton suggests that Ahab's aim was to preserve Damascus as a buffer-state between himself and the Assyrians (*Syria and Palestine*, p. 208).

[5] 1 Kings xx. 42 f. This chapter does not belong to the Elijah narrative, and was incorporated by the compiler of Kings from some other source. In its main features it appears to be a good historical narrative, though worked over by later revisers. The source is quite different from the Elijah story, for unknown prophets—or in chapter xxii.,

So much has been already said of the interesting story of Micaiah,[1] that it is only necessary to refer to it here as a good instance of the bitter hostility of the State towards the honest prophet. The king demands subserviency of the prophets as well as of his courtiers. The latter, however, are kindly disposed towards Micaiah, and urge him to feign agreement with Ahab's favourites. But the son of Imlah knows that the prophet of Jahveh can fulfil his duty to the State only by the strictest adherence to the truth. Not even the threats of the king, nor the blows of his fellow-seers, could move him to say other than what God revealed.

Once again, and that after Ahab's death, does Elijah appear to pronounce judgment upon the king. Ahaziah, being severely wounded by a fall, and having the ardent desire which possesses every mortal under like conditions to know the outcome, is said to have sent messengers to inquire his fate of Baal-zebub, the god of Ekron. That act was quite sufficient to arouse the zealous prophet of Jahveh; so we learn that Elijah sees in the event the working out of God's doom upon the house of Omri.[2]

In spite of the unfortunate prominence of legendary matter[3] in the fragments of the history of Elisha, it

Micaiah—take the place of Elijah. Kuenen supposes the prophet to be introduced in the later tradition that Israel's rescue should appear to be the work of God (*Bücher des A. T.*, p. 79).

[1] 1 Kings xxii.

[2] 2 Kings i. This narrative shows the marks of later hands, but is probably a true account of the fate of Ahab's son and successor.

[3] 2 Kings viii. 4 f. gives a good hint how these stories grew. Gehazi is engaged in telling the king the wonderful deeds of his master. Still, the very circulation of these stories is convincing proof that Elisha had been a man possessed of remarkable powers.

is not difficult to gather some significant facts which show this prophet's attitude towards the State.

Elisha had followed the allied kings in their invasion of Moab, strange to say, without the knowledge of either of them. It is easy to divine his purpose. However hostile he showed himself to the king of Israel,[1] he was not hostile to the nation which God had planted in Canaan. Moreover, he looked upon Jehoshaphat as a real follower of Jahveh, and so worthy of his consideration. The king had an equally good opinion of Elisha. When in answer to his inquiring whether a prophet of Jahveh was with the host, he was told by a servant of his royal brother that Elisha was there, he exclaimed, "The word of Jahveh is with him."[2] He was found in the camp when the invaders were likely to perish for lack of water, and was able to save the armies.[3]

Elisha followed the principle that he could wield

[1] Jehoran or Joram, the younger brother and successor of Ahaziah. His name is not given in the narrative.

[2] 2 Kings iii. 12.

[3] 2 Kings iii. 13 ff. It is interesting to note that in spite of Elisha's prediction that Jahveh would deliver the Moabites into the hands of the Hebrews, the invaders fled precipitately (2 Kings iii. 18, 27). Elisha's forecast might easily have been verified; for at first the Hebrews carried everything before them, and brought the Moabites to their last stand in Kir-hareseth. Here the king of Moab tried in vain to cut his way out; then, in desperation at his failure, he offered his eldest son as a human sacrifice, burning him on the wall in plain sight of the besiegers. According to the ideas of the times, no god could resist so frantic an appeal. Panic seized the Hebrews. No prophet could stay their flight; for they felt that they were in sore danger of a fierce visitation of Chemosh, whose land they had violated. Whatever effect the offering may have had upon Chemosh, there is no question of its effect upon the Hebrews. The famous Moabite Stone commemorates this victory.

most influence over the king by keeping on good terms with him. Except in the above instance, we find this prophet in friendly relation with his sovereign. There was a Shunamite who had provided a lodging-place for the prophet in his wanderings. Elisha desires to reward her, and asks her, "Wouldest thou be spoken for to the king, or to the captain of the host?"[1] We cannot look upon this question as an empty boast, but must regard it as evidence that the prophet's recommendation had great weight with the king and his officers.

There is further evidence of this influence in the release of the captured Syrians.[2] Beneath the story, elaborated as it is with legend, we may trace the fact that by some stroke of good fortune, so unexpected as to seem miraculous, a band of Syrians was captured by the Israelites. The king would not imitate the lenient policy of his forebear, but proposed to rid himself of so many of his deadly foes by their butchery in cold blood. Such murder was abhorrent to the prophet, and the time had not yet come when prisoners of war could be kept honourably, therefore the only course was their release. Elisha's counsel must have been highly valued indeed that the king at his word allowed the hated Syrians to walk unharmed from Samaria.[3] The impression which Elisha had produced upon the king is again revealed in his calling Gehazi before him after Elisha's death,

[1] 2 Kings iv. 13. [2] 2 Kings vi. 8 ff.

[3] The Chronicler tells us (2 Chron. xxviii. 9 ff.) that Pekah was induced to release 200,000 Judean prisoners captured in the Syro-Ephraimitish war.

and listening to the wonders wrought by the seer in the course of his lifetime.[1]

This fact that Elisha stood close to the king is not contradicted by the other fact that at one time the king vowed to take his life. It appears that the king would have surrendered to Syria, but that by Elisha's urgent advice he decides to stand a siege, a clear evidence of the prophet's power over him. When he learnt of the ghastly condition to which the people were reduced, two mothers coolly entering into a compact to cook and eat their babes, he swore that Elisha's head should not remain upon his shoulders another day.[2] The king was resolved to surrender on the best terms he could make. He could scarcely carry out this resolution in the face of the prophet whom he regarded as responsible for the suffering, and whom he yet dared not openly resist; therefore in the heat of his anger he determines to take the prophet's life. Very likely he would have carried out this purpose but for the timely raising of the siege.

It is easy to see that Elisha had won his influence with the king, not only by the display of his remarkable powers, but still more by the aid he gave the State at most opportune moments. He had saved the army in the deserts of Edom, as we have already seen, in spite of his declared unwillingness to serve the unfaithful king of Israel. He healed Naaman of his leprosy, moved no little by the king's terror lest his inability to aid his enemy and virtual over-lord should be made a *casus belli*.[3] He checkmated the

[1] 2 Kings viii. 4. [2] 2 Kings vi. 31. [3] 2 Kings v.

cunning of the Syrians when they tried to fall upon Israel unawares, by discovering their lurking-places, and reporting them to his king.[1]

Elisha promptly carried out one part of his master's programme, the revolution by which Hazael succeeded Ben-hadad. Whether or not he foresaw that the new king, the moment he heard that the hand of destiny was upon him, would foully murder his sovereign lying sick in bed, we do not know. There are very obscure parts of this story as it has survived in 2 Kings viii. 7 ff. The prophet seems to be uncertain in his vision, so that he sends word to Ben-hadad, "Thou shalt surely recover,"[2] at the same time adding, "howbeit Jahveh showed me that he shall surely die."

Elisha perceived that the king's sickness was not mortal, and sends him a message accordingly. He perceived also that the king's days were few, and that Hazael would succeed him. Probably he did not know that a cold-blooded murder would be the harmoniser of his seemingly contradictory visions.

But the house of Ahab, contrary to the declared

[1] 2 Kings vi. 8 ff. It is unnecessary to infer from this fact that God directly revealed the whereabouts of the Syrians to his servants, or, on the other hand, to reject the story on *a priori* grounds of impossibility. Elisha was the head of one or more bands of prophets. They were fleet of foot and hardy, and knew every nook of the wild lands, where they often had to take refuge. They would make ideal scouts, and were probably the direct source of the prophet's knowledge. Some of the Syrians had an exaggerated idea of the prophet's powers of divination; see 2 Kings vi. 12.

[2] The Hebrew text reads, "Thou shalt not recover." The margin gives the reading I have followed. The *kethibh*, or written text, seems to be due to an ancient harmonistic tendency.

will of God, still sat upon the throne of Israel, and the old sin of disloyalty to Jahveh still cropped out. Among the generals in the army of Israel there was one heroic in battle, fierce in disposition, and zealous for the God of Israel, Jehu the son of Nimshi. Jehoram had been wounded in the attack on Ramoth-gilead, which he was trying to wrest from Hazael, the new ruler of Syria, and had been obliged to retire to Jezreel to convalesce. The time was opportune, and Elisha was quick to see and seize the chance. Accordingly he sent one of the sons of the prophets to bid Jehu seize the throne.[1] So this prophet virtually ends his career, so far as we know it, by inspiring the bloodiest revolution in Hebrew history. I say "so far as we know it" advisedly, for if the Bible chronology is correct, our ignorance of Elisha's full career is tremendous. For there is yet a story of his efforts to save the State, which is placed in the reign of Joash, Jehu's grandson. If the date is right, Elisha must have lived at least a century.

King Joash, so we read, came to the aged prophet, now lying on his death-bed, and wept, crying the very words which had fallen from Elisha's lips many years before when his master was taken from his head, "My father, my father, Israel's chariot and its horsemen."[2] Just as Elisha had looked upon Elijah's loss as the taking away of the main prop of a feeble nation, so the king, looking upon the pallid face of the dying seer, perceives the loss of one who was so much the mainstay of Israel that he called him its chariot and horseman. This is a fine tribute to the

[1] 2 Kings ix. [2] 2 Kings xiii. 14; cf. *ib.* ii. 12.

marvellous career of the man of God from the lips of the king, and there is a fine exhibition of the warm love of his country, which age and the hand of death could not tear from the prophet's bosom. Once more he tries to inspire the weak scion of the fierce Jehu with courage and perseverance to withstand to the utmost the constant encroachment of Syria; for so must we interpret the obscure incident of the bow and arrows. But the king smites three times and then his feeble hand is stayed—a clear sign, which stirs the passions of the prophet, exhausted in body and patience, that such a king can never rescue his State from the perils besetting it.

But this chapter need not close in such gloom for Israel. Joash's son, Jeroboam II., was of sturdier fibre than his father, and his lot was cast in more auspicious times. Syria discovered an enemy in its rear which so fully occupied its attention, that resistance to Assyria instead of advance upon Israel became the enforced policy. Jeroboam was aroused to put forth his energy, to make full use of the critical state of Syria's affairs, by the hopeful and inspiriting prophecies of Jonah the son of Amittai,[1] a prophet who is otherwise unknown to us, unless indeed he is the original of that prophet whose brief career was used as a basis for the beautiful and edifying stories gathered much later in the little book of Jonah. The statement in the passage cited above that Jeroboam enlarged the borders of Israel according to the word of Jahveh which He spoke by Jonah the prophet, means simply that Jonah's insight first detected the

[1] 2 Kings xiv. 25.

favourable opportunity, and that the prophet directed the king in his operations.

I have told the story in detail of the activity of the early prophets in the affairs of State. It is desirable now to try to gather up the results in brief.

1. We note that after the division of the kingdom the prophets appear in Israel rather than Judah. We cannot infer that there were no prophets in the southern kingdom, but only that we have no knowledge of them. Except in so far as Judah was concerned in the affairs of Israel, and for much of this time Judah was the vassal of Israel—its history during the early period is almost a blank page. The Chronicler was evidently impressed with this defect, and tried to remedy it, but he was too far removed from original sources to accomplish much. Jehoshaphat's insistent demand for the counsel of a prophet of Jahveh implies that he was accustomed to this aid.

2. The good of the State was the chief concern of these prophets. It is true that their powers, like those of the seers who preceded them, were often at the service of individuals. But that was only an incident in the day's work. It is clear, from a study of such sources as we have, that the purpose of the prophet's life was the growth of the chosen people in religious and political power. It is true again that we have no full history of the private lives of these prophets, and that a larger knowledge might modify our conclusion. The compiler of Kings was not concerned with prophetic biography, but with national history. Nevertheless, in choosing passages to illumine his history, he fortunately embodied

whole sections instead of retelling the story in his own way. The selected passages enable us to form a fair idea of the prophet's life as a whole, and strengthen our conviction that the early seer was a patriot and statesman rather than a religious dreamer.

3. The prophets were radicals, not conservatives. They were wont to find the most congenial place upon the opposition bench. The policy of the court was not such as to win the approval of these morally heroic men. They never hesitated to administer justly deserved reproof, nor to predict boldly when they perceived that disaster would be the inevitable consequence of national folly.

4. They were so radical that they were *participes criminis* in all the revolutions of the period.[1] They did not wait to follow successful movements towards rebellion, but were instigators and leaders. This statement requires somewhat fuller illustration.

We have seen that the great rebellion of the northern kingdom was initiated by the words of Ahijah in the willing ears of Jeroboam; and that that of Jehu was instigated by Elisha. There is also good evidence that Baasha received the first suggestion of rebellion from a prophet. Jehu the son of Hanani reproaches this successful revolutionist thus in the name of Jahveh: "Since I lifted thee up from the dust, and placed thee as prince over My people Israel, and thou hast walked in the way of Jeroboam,

[1] Nathan was a staunch loyalist at the time of Adonijah's rebellion; but no good purpose was likely to be attained at that time by the displacing of a Solomon by an Adonijah.

and hast made My people sin, behold, I will utterly sweep away Baasha and his house."[1] Then it is said that as soon as he became king, Baasha smote all the house of Jeroboam, "according to the word of Jahveh which He spake by the mouth of Ahijah the Shilonite."[2] And Ahijah had said to Jeroboam's wife that "Jahveh would raise Him up a king over Israel who would cut off the house of Jeroboam."[3] Whence it is plain that if Ahijah or some successor did not whisper rebellion in Baasha's ear, there were yet oracles which would persuade the would-be king that he might head a righteous revolt.

The prophecy of Jehu not only confirms the impression that Baasha was instigated by the prophets, but that his house would in turn be overthrown by the same power. Jehu declares that the dynasty of Baasha will go down as it had come up. The various attempts to fulfil this prophecy by Zimri and Tibni, and the successful achievement of Omri, the general of the army, were surely influenced by this prophecy, if they were not the direct consequence of the suggestions of the prophets.

Finally, it was declared of Jehu, the overthrower of the great house of Omri, that his dynasty should survive for four generations.[4] This was promised because he had done well in his wholesale slaughter of the Baal worshippers, an opinion not shared by the prophet Hosea; but it is not difficult to believe that the real occasion of the prophecy was a revolution against this bloody house with which Hosea

[1] 1 Kings xvi. 2 f. [2] 1 Kings xv. 29.
[3] 1 Kings xiv. 14. [4] 2 Kings x. 30; xv. 12.

may have had something to do. Even in post-exilic days it was charged that Nehemiah was aiming at the kingdom by the aid of prophets who were inspired by him.[1]

I have indicated here and there the distrust on the part of recent scholars of the accuracy of the narratives in which the various prophets appear as a conspicuous figure. Most of these sections are regarded as late insertions because of the apparently legendary character of the stories. There is neither space for a lengthy critical discussion here, nor is this a fit place for it. But while it is clear that these scholars are not without some ground for their contention, their conclusions seem to me to be too sweeping. One may be doubtful of the story that Elijah restored a youth to life; but it is a long step from this to a general distrust of Elijah's fight for the true God. Greater discrimination is needed in our judgment. The stories may be stripped of the marvellous element, due to the accretions of later ages, and there is enough left to show that in those early days the prophets were a great power in the affairs of the nation, and that they always used their power for good.

Our study has now carried us down to the period of the literary prophets, who began with Amos, and whom for convenience sake I have sometimes called the great prophets. They were more enlightened than their predecessors; they lived in more enlightened days; but I am not sure that, all things considered, they were really greater men. The early

[1] Neh. vi. 7.

seers have suffered because their own words have perished, and because the story of their works has often come to us in a form much modified by a later age, which looked upon the most marvellous works as the greatest. If we may trust the Chronicler, there still survived in his days writings such as these. The words of Samuel the seer, of the prophet Nathan, of Gad the seer, of Ahijah the Shilonite, of Iddo the seer, of the prophet Shemaiah, of the prophet Jehu, the words of the seers,[1] these were all sources to which the Chronicler refers for further information. They were histories, not of the seers written by others, but of the nation written by the seers.

If this information is correct, Amos was by no means the first literary prophet, and, moreover, the national interest of the seers was so strong that they wrote, not the words which they had spoken, but the history of the times in which they lived.

Nevertheless, we cannot fill the great blank in the lives of these prophets by conjecture. As we know them, the prophets from Amos to Ezekiel are the great prophets, and to the rich field of their writings we gladly turn; but to do so we will begin a fresh chapter.

[1] See above, p. 138 f.

CHAPTER IX

THE PROPHET'S RELATION TO THE STATE

II. AMOS TO ISAIAH

THE centre of interest is still the Northern Kingdom.[1] The bloody revolutions which prevailed so long in that land had weakened the strength of the nation very seriously; but at the period with which we have now to deal the dynasty of Jehu was coming to its end, and that at a time when a rather better ruler than usual occupied the throne, and one who had the further advantage of a longer administration than his predecessors. We cannot overestimate the importance of a long period of comparative peace for a nation which had been constantly beset by wars from without and revolutions from within. For the nearly half-century of the reign of Jeroboam II. Israel was quite free from both evils. The dynasty of Jehu had held the throne now to the fourth generation, so that for a century there was no rebellion. The persistent enemy of Israel, Syria, was fully occupied in a vain attempt to keep back the tide which the Assyrian

[1] See additional note (11).

Empire was rolling up on the east.[1] Such was the political condition of Israel when the seer of Tekoa appeared in the streets of Bethel.

Amos has little to say about the State as such. His mission was to go preach to God's people Israel. The moral condition of the nation was his chief concern. He made no attempt to shape the political policy of the State. Whether he regarded Jeroboam's statecraft as wise or foolish, we have no means of knowing. But Amos is quick to disavow any right of the State to shape his course. Though Amaziah was a priest, his injunction against the preaching of Amos was not issued in the name of the Church, but in the name of the State. His complaint to Jeroboam was that the seer conspired against the king and predicted the captivity of the people. The reason he urges against Amos is that Bethel is a king's sanctuary and a royal house.

The prophet, however, holds a commission from his God with which the State has no right to interfere. Amos consequently holds that the prophet has a free hand as against the State, and his practice was consistent with that theory. Fearlessly, therefore, he declared that the nation of Israel was rushing to its doom, and that the royal house would be involved in that destruction.[2] And he does a more perilous thing than that. He not only predicts

[1] "Damascus was too crippled with her wars with Assyria to hold them [Judah and Israel] in subjection, and Assyria was too weak to collect tribute from the Palestinian States. The result was that both Judah and Israel enjoyed a brief season of unparalleled prosperity" (Paton, *Syria and Palestine*, p. 225).

[2] Amos v. 27; vi. 7, 14; vii. 9, 17.

the downfall of the nation, but he insists that the cause of the overthrow is the gross immorality of the people. That is indeed, from first to last, the burden of his preaching. His fundamental theology is that God will punish the wicked. Israel is wicked above almost all other people; therefore their punishment will be swift and sure. In the Assyrians, whose attack on Syria was giving to Israel a day of peace,[1] which they greatly misunderstood, Amos sees the rod which Jahveh would lay upon the back of Israel.

Little as Amos has to say about the State, it is clear that his whole interest is to save that State from the perils to which it is exposed. Assyria may be handicapped for a time, but it will speedily recover its power. Damascus will go down before its increasing blows, and then what can Israel do, exposed directly to this great empire? Amos is not a soldier, but a prophet. He has no suggestions to make about fortifications and armaments. But he does know that the nation's strength is being sapped by the licentiousness of the rich and the hard lot of the poor masses. Israel can be strong enough to face the coming storm only by winning the favour of God, and that is not obtainable by offering sacrifices, nor by merely keeping Sabbaths, but by doing justice every one to his neighbour. God's help would not be given in a miracle. No uplifting of a prophet's hands would stay the hostile hosts.[2] But if God's principles were applied in the

[1] It is by no means unlikely, as G. A. Smith suggests (*Twelve Prophets*, i. p. 66), that Jeroboam II. obtained his exemption from attack by the payment of tribute. Certainly that had been the custom of his predecessors.

[2] Exod. xvii. 11 f.

daily life of the people, then the nation would be strong. God would be on the side of the heavy battalions, because national strength meant national righteousness.

If we may accept the Messianic passage with which the prophecy of Amos closes[1] as genuine, then we see that the divided condition of Israel was regarded by Amos as at best an evil to be endured for a time; for in the Messianic age the tabernacle of David, which had fallen in the revolt of Jeroboam I., would be raised up again, and the Hebrew race would be reunited under a royal house of God's own choosing.

Hosea's prophetic career extended over a much longer period than that of Amos, and Hosea was a native of Israel.[2] It may have been the voice of the Judean seer which aroused in him a consciousness of the need of an interpreter of the Divine will. Amos saw the danger to Israel while it was still far off; but Hosea lived long enough to see that the doom of Samaria was very near.[3]

[1] Amos ix. 11 ff. The arguments for and against the authenticity of this passage are ably stated by G. A. Smith (*Twelve Prophets*, i. chap. x.). He regards the verses as an addition made long after Amos. This position is generally accepted. It seems to me not impossible that Amos may have expressed the hope for the restoration of unity to the nation under the Davidic dynasty, and that a later hand worked over the passage and added to it the further hopes of his own day.

[2] G. A. Smith says he was probably a priest; but there is little evidence to support that view.

[3] It may be noted that Hosea i.–iii. probably belongs to the time of Jeroboam II., and iv.–xiv. to the decade following, so that the actual prophecies of Hosea end some ten years before the fall of Samaria. See G. A. Smith, *Twelve Prophets*, i. p. 216 ff.; Kuenen, *Einl.*, ii. 312. The title to Hosea's book extends his work to the reign of Hezekiah;

Hosea did not hesitate to hold the king responsible for his wrongs. The royal house as well as the priests would find a judgment lodged against them,[1] because they had been a snare at Mizpah and a net spread upon Tabor. Hosea does not scruple to expose the princes who had indulged in drunken excesses "on the day of the king,"[2] that is, on the day of his coronation, or on his birthday.[3] The prophet was not slow to call the king to account; for the seer understood and followed the will of God, and God was the real sovereign of the nation, the king being at best but a vicegerent. All the national movements were subject to Divine control. In fact, the existence of the nation depended upon the will of God, who had called His Son out of Egypt while He was still a child.[4]

Hosea therefore held that no king had a right to sit upon the throne except by Divine appointment. Yet he found kings in Israel who had no such right to rule: "They have set up kings, but not by Me; they have made princes, and I knew it not."[5] This statement raises some large questions: Does Hosea refer here to the whole line of Israelitish kings? That is, does he contend that only the Davidic dynasty is approved of God? And was the revolt of Jeroboam,

but the mention of the Judean kings there can scarcely be original. Dr. Peters places some of the prophecies of Hosea in the time of Hoshea, apparently to explain the reference to Egypt; and chapters x. and xiv. he places even after the fall of Samaria (*Scriptures Hebrew and Christian*, p. 425 ff.). It is difficult to think that Hosea's career extended so far.

[1] Hosea v. 1. Reading as R.V. margin; G. A. Smith renders forcibly "on you is the sentence." [2] Hosea vii. 5.

[3] See Matt. xiv. 6. [4] Hosea xi. 1. [5] Hosea viii. 4.

and the subsequent revolts, though supported by prophets, the sin of schism? Or does the prophet allude here to some particular kings of Israel? We shall seek for Hosea's answer to these questions.

It is certain that Hosea did not look with favour upon the reigning house of Jehu; for he names one of his children Jezreel, because in a little while God would avenge the blood of Jezreel upon the house of Jehu, and cause the kingdom of the house of Israel to cease.[1] In the better days yet to come, Hosea, like Amos, looks for a reunion of the two kingdoms under one head,[2] and that of the line of David.[3] Hosea never finds anything good to say of the rulers of Israel. In the bitter days yet to befall the State the people will be disillusioned, and will deny their king, and confess his impotence.[4] That the prophet says, in the name of Jahveh, "I give thee a king in My anger, and take him away in My wrath,"[5] implies no more than an explanation of the fact that kings were suffered to rule in Israel, though contrary to God's will.

In endeavouring to learn exactly what Hosea's attitude towards his own government was, there are some facts which we may state as certain. The house of Jehu, though established by a rebellion instigated by Elisha,[6] had proved a failure in the essentials of

[1] Hosea i. 4. [2] Hosea i. 11. [3] Hosea iii. 5.
[4] Hosea x. 3; cf. xiii. 10. [5] Hosea xiii. 11.
[6] Kent says that "the details of the narrative suggest that this [Elisha's action] was only the launching of a conspiracy previously arranged" (*Hist.*, ii. 66). Our information is very scanty, but while the narrative will admit such a situation, it does not seem to me to suggest it.

a divinely ordered line of kings. Jehu shed so much blood, and that the best in the land, to insure his possession of the throne, that the nation was seriously weakened as a consequence. This assassination of the innocent was a crime in Hosea's eyes for which God would hold the house of the criminal to strict account. Then, again, Jehu paid tribute[1] to Shalmanezer II., the king of Assyria, in 842 B.C. There could have been but one purpose in this payment, namely, to secure the powerful aid of Assyria for his newly won throne. That method of dependence upon foreign aid instead of upon the God of Israel was also wholly repugnant to Hosea. Though Jeroboam II.'s reign was a period of peace and prosperity, Hosea could see that it was in spite of the king rather than because of him; for it was due to the Assyrian pressure upon Syria, Israel's inveterate foe. The moral rottenness of the times impaired the power of the nation to take full advantage of the breathing spell.

Again, it is to be noted that the greater part of Hosea's prophesying belongs to the years of disastrous anarchy following the death of Jeroboam II., about 743 B.C. In the twenty years from this date to the fall of Samaria there were six different kings upon the throne of Israel, and four of them reached that station as the result of a revolution. Under such conditions it is not surprising that the prophet

[1] Thus Jehu doubly weakened the nation by slaying its citizens and by imposing heavy taxes to meet his obligations to Assyria. To a clear-minded prophet such administration was not a mark of Divine guidance.

spoke slightingly of the royal house, and expected little towards the redemption of the nation from kings who sat on a throne to which they had no claim other than the sharpness of their swords or the support of a foreign power. Most scholars rightly hold that Hosea's references to the king are to be explained by virtue of these conditions, and are not due to his condemnation of the great revolt of Jeroboam the son of Nebat.

On the other hand, W. Robertson Smith[1] and Cheyne,[2] while admitting this special reference, still hold that Hosea believed that the Divine right of kings only existed in the house of David. My own opinion coincides with theirs. Hosea did not believe in the Davidic line as a matter of theory, but as a matter of practice. Whatever good may have been possible from the great schism, very little had been realised. The kingdom of Israel, which had been the principal state in Palestine, had decayed until now it was but a petty power.

But Hosea held to two fundamental principles which greatly influenced his political position. It was to him vital that the nation should be faithful to Jahveh, and as a consequence that it should be one. Robertson Smith does not exaggerate when he says, "To Hosea the unity of Israel is a thing of profound significance. . . . The unity of Israel and the unity of God are the basis of his whole doctrine of religion as a personal bond of love and fidelity."[3] These ideals could not be realised under such con-

[1] *Prophets of Israel*, p. 184. [2] *Hosea* in Camb. Bib., p. 82.
[3] *Op. cit.*, p. 186 f.

ditions as prevailed in Israel. There had never been stability in the government. From first to last, revolution had been the order of the day. In a period of a little more than two hundred years there were nine dynasties, each new house the result of a sanguinary revolution. Then, again, the worship of Baal, or of some other foreign god, was ever prevalent.

In Judah, on the other hand, the house of David persisted uninterruptedly from the founder to the fall of Jerusalem. While there was much apostasy in Judah, there was never a time when Jahveh was not worshipped there, and that worship ever had the support of the crown. It is on these grounds that this prophet could see no hope for Israel except by reunion with Judah, involving a reallegiance to the house of David. A stable government and an unswerving devotion to Jahveh were essential to the national life, so Hosea thought; and history had shown that those were not attainable under the anarchistic condition into which the North had fallen.

Hosea's confidence in the collapse of Samaria shows not only his Divine insight, but also his knowledge of human nature—if indeed these are not essentially the same thing.[1] There was no sign that the one way of salvation was discerned by the people, still less by the puppet kings, greedy of power, and dearly loving shame.[2] The nation would not see its way, necessarily a path of humility, and follow it until it had tasted to the last dregs the cup of schismatic folly. Instead of turning to its natural

[1] See John ii. 24 f. [2] Hosea iv. 18.

ally, at one time the monarchy vainly sought to purchase stability by subserviency to Assyria;[1] at another time, when the Assyrian allegiance appeared to be approaching the inevitable result of annexation, relief was sought from Egypt.[2] The prophet opposed both courses; for God had no desire to save Israel by either Assyrian or Egyptian help, but only by their turning with sincere penitence to God their Father and to David their king.

If Hosea was a sincere loyalist and believed that the final peace of Israel was to be found in the unity of the whole seed of Abraham, his patriotic sentiments did not blind him to the fact that the moral condition of Judah was by no means answerable to their high calling. A number of references to Judah[3] show that the sister kingdom was guilty like Israel, and should be punished accordingly. These declarations of the prophet seem strange to many scholars in view of his loyalty to the house of David. Hence Stade, Wellhausen, Cornill, and others have concluded that all the Judah passages are interpolations. The critical scholars have here done exactly what the conservatives are often justly blamed for doing, modifying the text to harmonise with preconceived ideas. There is no prophet who would have been less at pains for logical consistency than Hosea. Moreover, we cannot omit the references to Judah without a perceptible mutilation of the text. Hosea's

[1] Hosea v. 13; vii. 8, 11; viii. 9; x. 6; xi. 5; xiv. 3.

[2] Hosea vii. 11; ix. 6; xii. 1.

[3] Hosea i. 7; iv. 15; v. 5 ff., 10 ff.; vi. 4, 11; viii. 14; x. 11; xi. 12; xii. 2.

prophecies are much disjointed at best, but the indiscriminate excision of these passages adds to the confusion. The truth is that Hosea believed in established order, and that belief made him a loyalist without blinding his eyes to facts. One may be an ardent believer in an established Church without closing his eyes to its shortcomings.

There are other passages in which Hosea speaks more favourably of Judah. "I will have mercy upon the house of Judah, and will save them by Jahveh their God, and will not save them by bow, neither by sword, nor by battle, by horses, nor by horsemen."[1] Kuenen pronounces this "the one really doubtful passage" among the Judah references.[2] G. A. Smith is more pronounced: "it is so obviously intrusive in a prophecy dealing only with Israel, and it so clearly reflects the deliverance of Judah from Sennacherib in 701, that we cannot hold it for anything but an insertion of a date subsequent to that deliverance, and introduced by a pious Jew to signalise Judah's fate in contrast with Israel's."[3] The English versions render a doubtful passage in Hosea xi. 12, "But Judah ruleth yet with God, and is faithful with the Holy One." Cheyne renders, "Judah is yet wayward towards God, and towards the faithful Holy One."[4] G. A. Smith says, "Something is written about Judah, but the text is too obscure for translation";[5] but he adds that "an adverse statement is required by the parallel clauses." Nothing better

[1] Hosea i. 7.
[2] *Einl.*, ii. 323.
[3] *Twelve Prophets*, i. 213.
[4] Camb. Bib. *in loc.*
[5] *Twelve Prophets*, i. 301.

can be made out of the Hebrew text than Cheyne's rendering; no satisfactory emendation has yet been proposed; the passage is therefore too uncertain to weigh much in an argument. There is one other expression favourable to Judah: "Though thou, Israel, play the harlot, yet let not Judah offend."[1] G. A. Smith regards this verse and the following doubtful because "Hosea nowhere else makes any distinction between Ephraim and Judah," and on other grounds as well.[2] Kuenen looks upon the verb אשם "offend" as characteristic of Hosea, it being used also in Hosea v. 15; x. 2; xii. 1; xiv. 1; "the wish expressed with reference to Judah," he says, "fits exactly Hosea's favourable sentiments towards the sister kingdom."[3] The passage can scarcely be regarded as above suspicion; but the hope expressed that Judah would not fall hopelessly into the particular vice of idolatry which characterised Ephraim, seems to me perfectly harmonious with Hosea's position.

I have gone into this part of Hosea's teaching with considerable fulness, because of its importance, and the difficulties involved. We have seen what the prophet's attitude towards the State was; and now we naturally desire to know what was the State's attitude towards the prophet; for his utterances could have been considered nothing less than high treason. It must be confessed that Hosea's book throws no direct light on the matter. But indirectly we may be able to get some information.

[1] Hosea iv. 15.
[2] *Twelve Prophets*, i. 224.
[3] *Einl.*, ii. 323.

The period of Hosea's most active prophesying was the unsettled decade between Jeroboam II. and Pekah. There is nothing which can be even a remote reference to the attempt of Pekah to coerce Judah into the alliance against Assyria. The voice which had been so insistent against the moral wrongs and political blunders is silent just when these reach their climax. Silence under such conditions could scarcely be voluntary. In the period of constant revolution the upstart kings were too busy maintaining their short-lived reigns by the hunting down of political rivals to trouble themselves about the utterances of a comparatively obscure prophet. But with the accession of Pekah conditions were changed. He desired an alliance with Judah, not, however, by resigning his throne in favour of the legitimate dynasty of David, but by overthrowing that house, and imposing a foreign king[1] on the throne.

At the beginning of Pekah's reign[2] Israel seemed to take a new lease of life. Allied with other Palestinian powers, Pekah was able to keep his throne secure at home while waging war upon Judah. A prophet who upheld the most sweeping claims of the Davidic house was not likely to be viewed with favour at such a time as this. It is not improbable that the

[1] The son of Tabeel, probably a Syrian (Isa. vii. 6). Winckler identifies him with Rezon (*K.A.T.*[3], 135). If this is correct, Syria and Judah were to be united under one sceptre.

[2] Pekah's reign is given as twenty years in 2 Kings xv. 27; but the inscriptions show that this is far too long. According to the best light available now, this king ruled not more than three years. Menahem paid tribute to Assyria in 738, and Pekah was overthrown and Hoshea put in his place in 734.

State, in the person of the rebel king, was responsible for the silence of the prophet's voice. If this inference is correct, Hosea must be enrolled among the martyrs; for his spirit was not one that would yield to mere threats.

The book of Micah presents serious critical difficulties to the student. The matter is not helped by the great divergence of opinion of the best scholars. Nowack holds[1] that only chapters i. 2–ii. 11, iii., and probably iv. 9 f. 14, v. 9–13 are from Micah. On the other hand, several recent writers, especially Wildeboer, Von Ryssel, Elhorst, who have written at length upon this book, defend the genuineness of the whole.[2] Driver and G. A. Smith accept as genuine a much larger portion than most other scholars. For my purpose, however, it is not necessary to enter into these questions; for, as a rule, the few passages which show Micah's relation to the State are undoubtedly authentic.

Micah evidently regarded the prophet as the divinely appointed guardian of the State. Consequently he was fearless to rebuke those who were wrong, no matter what their power or position might be. In iii. 1–4, he reproves "the heads of Jacob and rulers of the house of Israel,"[3] for they loved evil and hated good, and did not scruple to wax fat by oppressing the people. The rulers made use of their

[1] Art. "Micah," Hastings' *Bible Dictionary*.

[2] See G. A. Smith, *Twelve Prophets*, i. 358 ff., for a good summary of the critical opinions.

[3] That Micah means the terms Jacob and Israel at least to include Judah is certain from iii. 9 f., where it is said that these same rulers build up Zion with blood.

official position to heap up wealth for themselves—a condition of things still widely prevalent in spite of the innumerable prophets who have raised their voice in protest. But Micah believed in a just God, and therefore he looked upon punishment as certain. In the distress which would come upon these oppressors they would cry to Jahveh for deliverance; but Jahveh's ears would be closed to such unworthy suppliants. Those who fed upon their neighbours, and only thought of God when their neighbours proposed to feed upon them, would find that they had sown the wind and would reap the whirlwind.

Micah has more to say of these same high officers of State. "They build up Zion with blood and Jerusalem with iniquity."[1] They were all led by purely mercenary motives: "The heads thereof judge for reward, and the priests thereof teach for hire, and the prophets thereof divine for money."[2] It is vain for such to lean upon Jahveh and say, "Is not Jahveh in our midst? Therefore no evil shall befall us." Such leaders as these could not avert the punishment which God would inflict upon the unrighteous. Officers of this character would prove of no avail in the hour of peril. Even the king would not serve as a support for the tottering State. The prophet looks to the future and sees the distress coming upon the city: "Now why dost thou cry out aloud?" he asks. "Is there no king[3] in thee, is thy counsellor perished,

[1] Micah iii. 10. [2] Micah iii. 11.

[3] Many suppose the "king" to refer to Jahveh. This is necessarily the explanation of those who assign this section to a later date than Micah. That interpretation gives to the whole passage a sense widely different from that above.

that pangs have taken hold of thee as of a woman in travail?"[1] The king would not even have the semblance of saving the State. Jahveh alone would do that after the king and counsellor had been cast away, and the people made to feel the bitterness of exile.[2]

However frankly Micah spoke his mind, the king did not attempt to restrain his speech. No prophet was ever plainer than Micah when he said, "Zion shall be plowed as a field, and Jerusalem become heaps, and the mountain of the house as the high places of the forest."[3] There is nothing in Micah's own book to show how the land bore his words; but there is testimony of the highest order in Jeremiah. Here we learn that Hezekiah and the people of Judah not only did not think of putting the prophet to death, but, on the contrary, they feared Jahveh and entreated His favour, so that Jahveh repented of the evil He had pronounced upon them.[4] It was the heeding of Micah's preaching on the part of the king which postponed the woe that the prophet had foretold. In the reign of Hezekiah, who for other reasons is justly called a good king, we find a time of tolerance such as the prophets rarely enjoyed in other periods of Hebrew history.

Of all the prophets whom God raised up among the Hebrew people, the greatest statesman was Isaiah the son of Amoz. He was concerned, as every true man of God must be concerned, with all vital interests of his people. But he gave himself unceas-

[1] Micah iv. 9.
[2] Micah iv. 10.
[3] Micah iii. 12.
[4] Jer. xxvi. 17 ff.

ingly to the great problem of saving the State, which in his long life faced many critical situations. It is unnecessary—indeed, it is well-nigh impossible within my limits—to bring out every detail of his work for the State. But a few conspicuous instances will show his position.

Isaiah held fast to a few cardinal principles which served as a good guide at all critical junctures. He believed that Judah was under the protection of an all mighty and all holy God. The peace and safety of the State depended therefore on fidelity to Him and confidence in Him. Political devices, such as were commonly resorted to by all peoples in all ages, would in the long run work only harm to a feeble folk like the Judeans. Zion would be invulnerable, not by reason of her good armies, nor by membership in a foreign alliance, but by independence of every power of earth, and by sole reliance upon Jahveh of hosts.

Consequently we find him standing in direct opposition to king Ahaz at the time of the Syro-Ephraimitish war. His position in that trying time shows both his steadfast adherence to his fundamental doctrine and his political insight.

Razon[1] of Damascus and Pekah of Israel were organising a league to resist the Assyrian advance west of the Euphrates. They believed that by a consolidation of interests they could throw off the domination of that great power and successfully

[1] Rezin, the Biblical form of the name, is an easily understood error for Rezon or Razon. The Greek texts have Ρασων or Ρασσων, agreeing with Assyrian Rasunnu. See *K.A.T.*[3], iii. 55.

resist a reforging of their chains. They seem to have invited Ahaz along with other kings to join their league, but Ahaz refused. Judah was too considerable a power to leave in their rear, and they made the capital mistake of attempting to force her into the alliance, proposing to dethrone Ahaz and set up a foreign king who would serve the allied interests.[1] The war dragged along for a considerable time, and at first, naturally enough, Judah suffered severely. It is true that our knowledge of the war is very limited,[2] but when we are told that "his heart and the heart of his people shook as the trees of the forest shake with the wind,"[3] it means a good deal.

Ahaz was not indifferent to the danger, but his method of meeting it was certain to bring him face to face with a still graver peril later on. He made an

[1] Sayce supposes that Pekah was anxious to overthrow the Davidic dynasty and rule over all Israel; the forcing of Judah into the alliance was of the nature of an appeal to the patriotic sentiments of the people (*H. C. M.*, p. 401). The Syrians and Israelites were quite free at this time (735 B.C.) to make elaborate preparations for war, because the annals of Tiglath-Pileser show that he was busily engaged in a campaign in the North.

[2] Besides this reference in Isaiah, we have the accounts of the war in 2 Kings xv. 37, xvi. 5–9; 2 Chron. xxviii. 5–18. Hostilities apparently began in the closing part of Jotham's reign (2 Kings xv. 37). Chronicles says nothing of an alliance against Judah, but says that Jahveh sent Syria against Ahaz, and that "he was delivered into the hand of the king of Israel." We read that Pekah slew 120,000 Judeans in one day, "because they had forsaken Jahveh," and took 200,000 prisoners, who were released, however, at the solicitation of Oded the prophet. This story can scarcely be reconciled with the reference in Isaiah; but there may be a germ of historical truth, as Winckler suggests, especially in the representation of the overwhelming defeat of the Judeans, which we may place in the early stages of the war.

[3] Isa. vii. 2.

alliance directly with the common enemy.[1] By paying tribute to Assyria he expected to secure so vigorous an attack on the North that both Syria and Ephraim would find occupation for their arms in self-defence. It was this alliance with Assyria that Isaiah tried so hard to prevent, though his efforts were unhappily in vain. He tried to persuade the king that he exaggerated the danger. The message with which Jahveh sent him to meet the king in the highway by the fuller's field[2] was one of confidence: "Be wary and keep thyself calm; fear not, neither let thy heart be faint, because of these two fag-ends of smoking fire brands."[3] The allied powers, seemingly mighty as they are, have reached the end of their strength. They are burnt out like smoking brands, and can never again be fanned into effective flame. Therefore the prophet could pronounce with great positiveness his oracle of God: "Thus saith the Lord Jahveh, it shall not stand, neither shall it come to pass."[4]

Ahaz would not believe, therefore he would not be established.[5] Declining to believe, the king failed to take the steps whereby establishment was possible, and on the contrary took the steps by which it was made impossible. In vain did the prophet plead that Ahaz should ask the message to be confirmed by a sign. The king was too confident of the success of his own

[1] 2 Kings xvi. 7–9; 2 Chron. xxviii. 16–20.

[2] Ahaz was expecting the siege which is mentioned in Isa. vii. 1, 2 Kings xvi. 5, and was looking after the water supply.

[3] Isa. vii. 4; for the most part, Cheyne's rendering in Poly. Bib.

[4] Isa. vii. 7. [5] Isa. vii. 9.

schemes to be willing to modify them to suit a plan of God. On account of this fatal policy God would give a child as a sign of two things, one the confirming of the prophet's word: "Before the child shall know to refuse the evil and choose the good, the land whose two kings thou dreadest shall be forsaken";[1] the other to point out the ominous outlook for Judah: "Jahveh will bring upon thee, and upon thy people, and upon thy father's house, days that have not come from the day that Ephraim departed from Judah—even the king of Assyria."[2] Judah will suffer the worst fate which has befallen her since the great schism which left her an isolated and petty folk. And that disaster will be the direct consequence of Ahaz's efforts to save the State. Isaiah could see that Assyria needed no urging from Judah to coerce her rebellious subjects, and that Ahaz's offering of tribute would excite the cupidity of that empire, so that it would never rest until it had drained Judah's resources to the utmost.

Isaiah was powerless to do more than advise, and Ahaz was willing enough that the prophet should give counsel as long as he could shape the policy of the State to suit his will. The king did not interfere with the prophet's freedom of speech, even though he repudiated his advice. Ahaz lived long enough to see that the prophet was right; Assyria easily put down the coalition and reduced the northern peoples

[1] Isa. vii. 16.

[2] Cheyne regards this whole verse as a gloss, and the closing words "the king of Assyria" as a gloss to a gloss. Whether added by a later hand or not, the king of Assyria is rightly named as the source of danger.

to a more complete subjection than before.[1] Judah, too, became a vassal state,[2] and the annual tribute became not only a burden, but a constant source of danger. For the people then, as well as later, were sure to become restless under a system of tribute to Cæsar, and the cessation of payment at any time would bring about an Assyrian invasion. From this act of Ahaz dates the long series of troubles which Judah suffered at the hands of the empire of the Euphrates.

It is but natural to conjecture what would have been the fate of Judah if Isaiah's advice had been scrupulously followed. It is easy to see the disastrous consequences of disregarding the prophet's vision, and, while knowledge fails, I think it not impossible to estimate the results had better counsels prevailed. For Judah had these two leading sources of safety, always good in perilous times for the individual or the nation, isolation and obscurity. It is always true that "death loves a shining mark," and Judah was not very brilliant among the nations of the world at that time. By her course of action she removed these protections. Otherwise it seems clear that she might, at all events, have escaped Assyrian greed, and certainly have persisted much longer than she did.

It is impossible to ignore a radically different view of the history of this period, which may be found

[1] See *K.A.T.*[3], p. 55 f., 264 f. According to Tiglath-pileser's annals, only the city of Samaria was left to Pekah.

[2] The Chronicler says, "Tiglath-pilneser king of Assyria came unto him, and distressed him, and strengthened him not" (2 Chron. xxviii. 20).

briefly stated by Winckler.[1] Judah had long been the vassal of Israel, and so indirectly was under Assyria. When Israel resolved to throw off the yoke in conjunction with Syria, Judah was forced to choose between rebellion against Israelite sovereignty and direct alliance with Assyria. Ahaz saw that the allies would be crushed as soon as Tiglath-pileser appeared on the scene, and he elected to be on the side of the heavy battalions. He had hopes that, as a reward for his fidelity, the ancient dominions of the house of David might be restored to him. This interpretation of the history sets Ahaz's action in quite a different light. If that were the condition of things, Ahaz's choice would have been pre-eminently wise, and Isaiah's attitude quite inexplicable. For it is plain that Isaiah condemned the policy of Ahaz.[2] There seems to be no sufficient evidence for Winckler's statement: "The relation of Judah to Israel had finally become that of a vassal," though it is true that Israel had at times held domination over the sister kingdom.

In taking up Isaiah's political activity during the reign of Hezekiah, we are confronted with such wide difference of expert opinion that we feel some sympathy with the old demand of conservatism, that the critics should agree among themselves before they attempt to convert others to their belief. Hezekiah's accession is placed all the way from 728 to 714 B.C.,[3]

[1] *K.A.T.*[3], p. 265 f.

[2] Not his refusal to ally with Israel, but his overtures to Assyria; Isaiah wanted to preserve the *status quo*.

[3] The earliest date is based on 2 Kings xviii. 10, where it is said that Samaria was taken in the sixth year of Hezekiah. As Samaria

and the embassy of Merodach-baladan is by some put as early as 720 B.C., by others as late as 701 B.C. The divergent views of competent scholars in this case, however, are not due to any vagaries of opinion on their part, but to the uncertainty of the data, and we must admit that the chronology of the period is an unsolved problem. Our study will not be seriously affected, however, by ignorance as to the date of the particular events in the life of the prophet which we shall consider.

The Chronicler tells us expressly that Hezekiah's reformation began in the first month of his first year.[1] In 2 Kings also the reform is placed at the beginning of his reign.[2] In Jeremiah xxvi. 18 f. the reform of Hezekiah is traced to the influence of Micah. The prophecy of Micah certainly belongs to the time before the fall of Samaria, so that, according to the earliest Biblical evidence, Hezekiah reached the throne before 722, and his reformation belongs to the early days of his reign. The Chronicler describes the reforms at great length, and makes them chiefly of a ritual character. According to Kings, he "removed the high places, brake the pillars, and cut down the Asherah; and he brake in pieces the brazen serpent that Moses had made."[3]

Discredit has been placed upon this story by

fell in 722, Hezekiah would have come to the throne in 728 or 727. 2 Kings xviii. 13 places the invasion of Sennacherib, which belongs to the year 701 B.C., in Hezekiah's fourteenth year, hence his accession would be placed 715 or 714. Kittel follows Dillmann in placing Hezekiah's succession at 719.

[1] 2 Chron. xxix. 3. [2] 2 Kings xviii. 4.

[3] 2 Kings xviii. 4.

various scholars, some questioning the reformation altogether, others placing it as late as the invasion of Sennacherib. But there is good reason for holding that the Biblical account is in the main correct. Hezekiah differed radically from his father Ahaz, in that he was a faithful worshipper of Jahveh. What more natural than that upon his coronation he should sweep away the corruptions which Ahaz had introduced in the temple worship? The details in Chronicles are not to be pressed, and even the brief record in Kings may be far from accurate, but there is every reason to hold that Hezekiah began his rule with just such a repentance of the evils which he found as the elders of Jehoiakim's time attributed to him. Someone has said that there is scarcely an event in the Old Testament better attested than Hezekiah's reformation. The testimony of Jeremiah xxvi. 18 f. cannot be disregarded.

But is Isaiah's influence not traceable in Hezekiah's reform?[1] Was it wholly due to Micah, as we should infer from the statement in Jeremiah? It would be very strange if the country prophet led the king to amend the royal ways and the prophet of the court produced no effect at all. For Isaiah had been active for more than ten years when Hezekiah ascended the throne.[2] In the early prophecies of Isaiah there is no such specific utterance with which to connect the reform as in Micah iii. 12. Moreover,

[1] Kent says that the religious reformation under Hezekiah was one of the fruits of the influence of the prophetic party under Isaiah's leadership (*History*, ii. p. 157).

[2] Isaiah's call was in 740 or 738; Hezekiah's accession, 728 to 714.

if the reform actually took the line indicated by the historians, it would command little interest from the great prophet, who felt that the breaking down of Asherahs was but a feeble attempt at obedience to the will of God. At the same time Hezekiah must have been familiar with the ringing utterances of the seer who had long been a conspicuous figure in Jerusalem, and his resolve to follow the counsel of the God of his people must have been largely due to Isaiah. Isaiah may have inspired the reformation, even though it did not follow a course which could command his approval.

Isaiah's influence seems to have been potent enough to save Judah from disaster at the time of Sargon's invasion in 711 B.C., a memorable event which now claims our attention. Yet it is somewhat difficult to draw the limits of Isaiah's work in connexion with this Assyrian king. A few years ago Sargon was quite unknown, save for a mention in Isaiah xx. Since the discovery of his own account of the attack upon Ashdod, there has been a tendency to connect many of Isaiah's Assyrian prophecies with this invasion. There are some things, however, which are clear. Hezekiah had fallen heir to an annual tribute to the Assyrian king. Some of the states of Canaan proposed to throw off the yoke, and Hezekiah was doubtless urged to cast in his fortunes with them. Isaiah laboured to prevent this suicidal course. His chief object seems to have been to show the vanity of the expected aid from Egypt. He stripped himself of his prophetic robes,[1] and went

[1] See p. 70.

about for three years in the garb of a captive,[1] as a sign of the humiliation which Assyria would inflict upon Egypt.[2] This bold step of the prophet did not apparently preserve the absolute loyalty of Hezekiah, for he seems to have stopped the payment of tribute. But it did apparently restrain him from any active part in the rebellion, so that Judah suffered no consequences other than the resumption of the tribute money.

The Egyptians had doubtless inspired this revolt. The pacification of Canaan by the Assyrians was always a menace to them, and they were ever sowing seeds of rebellion. Hezekiah was certainly involved to a certain extent, for Sargon mentions Philistia, Judah, Edom, and Moab along with Ashdod.[3] But when the Assyrian general, the Tartan, or Turtan, appeared,[4] the allies seem to have left Ashdod to its fate. It seems clear that Hezekiah took no part in the actual struggle, much as he may have hoped from its outcome, though he had probably stopped the payment of his annual tribute. It was doubtless Isaiah's influence which kept the king quiet. For the prophet saw the hopelessness of a contest with Sargon, and the untrustworthiness of the Egyptian promise. He seems to have regarded the case as very serious though. Enormous pressure must have been exerted to bring Hezekiah into the struggle. Isaiah adopted a bold course to counteract the

[1] From this statement and from the varying Assyrian records Winckler draws the conclusion that the revolt lasted three years (*K.A.T.*[3], p. 65).

[2] Isa. xx. [3] *K.A.T.*[3], p. 70. [4] Isa. xx. 1.

anti-Assyrian influence. During the three years[1] of the revolt he went about the streets of Jerusalem "naked and barefoot"[2] *i.e.* in the garb of a captive slave, as a sign of the fate that would befall Egypt[3] and Ethiopia at the hand of the power against which they had stirred up revolt.

The wisdom of the prophet's course was shown from the completeness of Sargon's suppression of the uprising, and the reward of his unpleasant personal sacrifice—for the dress of a slave must have been a disagreeable garb for one of his standing —was found in his saving Judah from an actual invasion, with all its accompanying disasters.

The embassy of Merodach-baladan[4] will next engage our attention. In the Biblical sources we have the record in 2 Kings xx. 12–21, and the parallel passage in Isaiah xxxix. We have also some further

[1] Sargon's annals place the invasion in the eleventh year of his reign (711 B.C.); the fragments of a clay prism date it in the ninth year. Winckler explains the discrepancy by supposing the latter to be the date at which the revolt began and the former its ending (*K.A.T.*[3], p. 69 f.). This agrees exactly with Isaiah's three years.

[2] Isa. xx. 3.

[3] Winckler holds that Isaiah's reference is not to the empires of the Nile, but to a Musri and Kush in Western Arabia. Many similar references are explained in the same way. Rogers says that his "suggestions concerning Musri are exceedingly fruitful, and many are undoubtedly correct, but he has carried the matter too far in attempting to eliminate Egypt almost entirely and to supplant it with Musri" (*Hist. of Babylonia and Assyria*, ii. p. 144 n.). Winckler's views may be found in *K.A.T.*[3], p. 70 f. Hommel seems to have made the same suggestion independently; see Hilprecht's *Explorations in Bible Lands*, p. 743; cf. Hommel's art. "Assyria," Hastings' *Bib. Dict.*

[4] In 2 Kings xx. 12 the name is given as Berodach-baladan. Isa. xxxix. 1 has the correct form, as shown by the inscriptions, in which the name is Marduk-abal-iddina.

light from Assyrian sources. From these we learn that this prince took possession of Southern Babylonia, and in 721 B.C. was proclaimed king of Babylon. Babylonia had been an Assyrian province, and Sargon was not likely to lose it without a bitter struggle. But his first battle was unsuccessful, for Merodach-baladan was supported by a number of allies, especially the Elamites and Aramaeans. In 710, however, after the suppression of the uprisings in the West and North, some of which the usurper may have helped to instigate, Sargon turned southward and completely routed his enemy and regained complete control of Babylon.

In 702, when Sargon had been succeeded by Sennacherib, Babylonia was once more loosened from its Assyrian control, and the clever Chaldean came forth again from the southern marshes and set himself up as king. In order to maintain his position, it was essential that he keep the Assyrian king busily employed elsewhere. To do this it was only necessary to stir up rebellion among the many peoples over whom the Assyrian ruled, and who were ever zealous for a blow to regain their lost freedom. On this occasion Merodach-baladan's rule was short, for Sennacherib ignored for the time the uprising in the West, and turned his army towards Babylon. His success was quick and complete. After a rule of but nine months,[1] the Chaldean was finally overthrown.[2]

The embassy to Hezekiah would fit in very well

[1] Or six months according to Winckler.

[2] See Rogers, *Hist. of Babyl. and Assyr.*, ii. pp. 152 ff, 187 ff.

with any of these periods. Winckler places it in 720 B.C.,[1] Sayce fixes it at 711 B.C.,[2] while Rogers and others date it in 702. The book of Kings places this embassy after the invasion of Sennacherib, 701 B.C. But it also says that Hezekiah lived fifteen years after his sickness, in connexion with which Merodach-baladan sent the embassy; this would carry his reign down to 686 B.C. To say nothing of the uncertainty of the numbers in the text, we are in doubt about the limits of Hezekiah's reign. On the whole, the last-named date, 702 B.C., seems the most probable.[3]

The only ostensible purpose of the embassy was to congratulate Hezekiah upon his recovery from sickness. But apparently the king was apprised of the real purpose of the visit. For the mere congratulations would offer no excuse for his exhibit of his military resources. We are told that "Hezekiah hearkened unto them,[4] and showed them all the house of his precious things, the silver, and the gold, and the spices, and the precious oil, and the house of his armour, and all that was found in his treasures: there was nothing in his house, nor in all his dominion, that Hezekiah showed them not."[5] From this display

[1] *K.A.T.*[3], 72, 270 f.

[2] *H.C.M.*, 424 ff; Hastings' *Bible Dict.*, iii. 347.

[3] The most serious objection to this date is the shortness of Merodach-baladan's reign at that time, but nine months at most. If 702 is the correct date, the embassy must have gone back to a defeated and deposed monarch.

[4] So Isa. xxxix. 2; this is undoubtedly the correct text, and has the support of the Greek versions. The difference in Hebrew is only that of a single letter.

[5] 2 Kings xx. 13.

it is plain that the real object of the king was to show the envoys that he would be no mean ally in case of war.

How Isaiah's suspicions were aroused we cannot tell. It would be impossible to keep the presence of these strangers a secret, but Hezekiah seems to have tried to conceal their real purpose. There is a foreboding sternness in the prophet's questions: "What said these men? and from whence came they unto thee? What have they seen in thy house?" Hezekiah answers all the questions but the first; that matter he regards as his secret. But it was not really essential to the keen prophet; he knows the state of affairs in Babylon, and he knows that Merodach-baladan would not trouble himself about a Judean king's sickness or recovery. He perceives that the king has virtually allied himself with this distant power, and would revolt against his suzerain, and he hastens to point out the disastrous consequences of Hezekiah's folly: "The days come, that all that is in thy house, and that which thy fathers have laid up in store unto this day, shall be carried to Babylon."[1]

Isaiah's prediction has received many interpretations. By some it is regarded as a clear vision of what actually took place more than a century later, when the last treasures were taken to Babylon. But that would make the prophecy meaningless to Hezekiah. Moreover, Isaiah also says, "Of thy sons that shall issue from thee, whom thou shalt beget, shall they take away: and they shall be eunuchs in the palace of the

[1] 2 Kings xx. 17.

king of Babylon."[1] This is too specific to refer to Hezekiah's remote descendants. Then, further, the prophecy is aimed at the king's folly in meditating rebellion, whereas the older view would make the display of his treasures to a greedy potentate a sin.

Again, the prediction is explained as a *vaticinium ex eventu*.[2] But it seems to me unlikely that the prediction was wholly manufactured to agree with the historic facts, though it might easily be that the form was modified in conformity with the event. Isaiah may have named Assyria, and the historian who wrote this part of his life changed the name to Babylon.[3]

In all ages and among all peoples the death of an absolute monarch has been a matter of great moment to his subjects, whether native or foreign. If the deceased king had been a successful conqueror, there was always the hope that his successor might prove more feeble, and so the vassal states be able to regain their freedom. Sargon had shown himself an able general, and had made good the claims of his predecessors to a great empire. Much of it was held together, however, simply by the might of his brawny arms. Consequently, when the great conqueror died, in 705, exultant hopes were raised among the subjugated peoples that they would be strong enough to

[1] Isa. xxxix. 7.

[2] See *e.g.* art. "Hezekiah," Hastings' *Bible Dict.*, ii. 378.

[3] There is another possible explanation. Babylon was subject to Assyria. Transported captives were sent frequently to the colonies, and Isaiah may have expected Sennacherib to send the prisoners to Babylonia. But it is only by misunderstanding prophecy that one can press literally a prophetic prediction.

throw off the yoke. It is perfectly possible that Isaiah xiv. 28–32 shows the great expectations of the Philistines at this crisis, and the prophet's assurance that their hopes would soon be dashed to the ground.[1]

However that may be, it is certain that Sennacherib ascended the throne to find himself confronted with rebellion in many of the remoter parts of his empire. Probably as being the least important, he neglected the West for a few years and addressed himself to the graver problems in other parts of his wide realm.

The nations of the West took advantage of the absence of the Assyrian armies, and combined in a seemingly formidable revolt. Padi, the king of Ekron, appears to have been the only one to remain loyal, and he was dethroned and sent to Hezekiah as a prisoner. That fact, coupled with the embassy of Merodach-baladan, would indicate that Hezekiah was the recognised head of the revolting allies. Egypt also contributed to the spirit of rebellion by lavish promises of aid. Against this reliance upon the empire of the Nile, the great prophet set his face like a flint. He was utterly opposed to the rebellion; for he knew that the Assyrians had not lost their power, that an attempt to throw off the yoke would only fasten it tighter, and that no real aid could be expected from the Nile. In chapters xxx., xxxi. of his book we have a record of his zealous efforts

[1] The serpent's tooth would be Sargon, and the fiery flying serpent would be Sennacherib, his successor. Driver inclines to this view (*L. O. T.*[6], p. 213). Cheyne accepts the date of the title ("the year that King Ahaz died"), and refers both expressions to Sargon (Polychrome Bible, p. 149).

to preserve the fidelity of Judah to the power which held her in subjection.

"Woe to the rebellious children," he cries in Jahveh's name, "that take counsel, but not of Me: and that make a league, but not of My Spirit, that they may add sin to sin; that set out to go down into Egypt, and have not asked at My mouth; to strengthen themselves in the strength of Pharaoh, and to take refuge in the shadow of Egypt! Therefore shall the strength of Pharaoh be your shame, and the refuge in the shadow of Egypt your confusion."[1]

The anti-Assyrian party was very strong at this period. The Hebrews were ever galled by a foreign domination, which seemed to fly in the face of the Divine promises to their forefathers, and the appeal to a religious and patriotic sentiment never gained adherents more easily than in the days of Hezekiah. The revolters were so sure of their position that they attempted to silence opposition. This was the only time when Isaiah was constrained to cry out against the attempt to put down the truth by violent means. The lying children said to the seers, "See not," and to the prophets, "prophesy not unto us right things, speak unto us smooth things," *i.e.* those which will arouse no opposition,[2] the invariable resource of those who are persistently in the wrong.

Isaiah held that the revolt against Assyria was rebellion against the Lord, because it was contrary to His will; not that Jahveh was indifferent to the national distress, for He would save His people

[1] Isa. xxx. 1–3. [2] Isa. xxx. 10.

in His own way and in His own time. The saving of the nation could not be accomplished by "the Egyptians, who are men, and not God; and their horses flesh, and not spirit," and who shall stumble in their helping even as those helped shall fall, when Jahveh shall stretch out His mighty hand.[1] For that hand will be stretched out and the Assyrian will struggle in vain against it: "as birds hovering, so will Jahveh of hosts protect Jerusalem: He will protect and deliver it, He will pass over and preserve it. . . . The Assyrian shall fall by the sword, not of a man; and the sword, not of men, shall devour him. . . . His rock shall pass away by reason of terror, and his princes shall be dismayed at the ensign, saith Jahveh, whose fire is in Zion, and His furnace in Jerusalem."[2]

The movement against Assyria was popular among the people, was more than countenanced by the king, and naturally enrolled among its supporters some of the chief officers of the State. There was one, however, whose support was for some reason so obnoxious to Isaiah that he for once, and once only, indulges in personal denunciation. He made a vigorous attack upon Shebna, though the latter occupied a commanding position in the king's household. This position was that of steward or treasurer over the house.[3] He was a foreigner apparently, but

[1] Isa. xxxi. 3. [2] Isa. xxxi. 5–9.

[3] This office had become an important one; it may have been originally a minor domestic place, but in royal households such offices increase their powers. Shebna was an important figure, and evidently possessed much wealth. See further art. "Shebna," Hastings' *Bible Dict.*

was taking up permanent citizenship in Judah, and even building for himself, as was the custom of the great, a tomb in which his body should lie.[1]

Shebna's policy and influence were so odious in Isaiah's eyes, that his language against him is very strong: "Jahveh, like a strong man, will hurl thee away violently: yea He will wrap thee up closely. He will surely wind thee round and round, and toss thee like a ball into a large country; there shalt thou die, and there shall be the chariots of thy glory, thou shame[2] of thy lord's house."[3]

Isaiah did not rest with denunciation or predictions of disaster, but set to work to secure Shebna's removal from office. The fact that he was able to accomplish his object and to name Shebna's successor indicates that our prophet was speaking with intimate knowledge of the purposes of the court, though doubtless his own influence had contributed largely to the minister's downfall. Surely there is more than an ordinary prophetic declaration in the threat: "I will thrust thee from thine office; and from thy station shalt thou be pulled down. . . . I will call My servant Eliakim the son of Hilkiah: and I will clothe him with thy robe, and strengthen him with thy girdle, and I will commit thy authority into his hand."[4] A short time afterwards Eliakim the son of Hilkiah held the office of steward of the king's house-

[1] Isa. xxii. 16. For similar cases see 2 Sam. xviii. 18; 2 Chron. xvi. 14; Matt. xxvii. 60.

[2] From this term it may be that Shebna was open to attack on the side of moral character as well as political policy.

[3] Isa. xxii. 17 f. [4] Isa. xxii. 19–21.

hold.[1] Isaiah not only opposed the policy of rebellion against Assyria and alliance with Egypt, but he used his power for the overthrow of a chief minister and apparently chose his successor. His influence therefore was very powerful in spite of his belonging to the opposition.

The question has been raised as to whether the prophet's victory was real or only apparent. It is clear that Eliakim succeeded Shebna as governor of the palace. What became of Shebna? Was Isaiah's prediction fulfilled that he would be cast out into another foreign land and die there? Along with Eliakim, when he was sent to treat with the Assyrian envoys, was Shebna the secretary?[2] It is generally assumed that this is the same Shebna whom Isaiah had driven from office, and the degradation is explained by asserting that the new post was a less important one.[3] But we know so little concerning these offices that we can scarcely be very positive about their relative consequence. Moreover, the assignment to a less important office is not the same punishment as exile and death, and so would not be any real fulfilment of Isaiah's prediction. But it seems to me perfectly possible that there was more than one Shebna at Jerusalem. In any case, we cannot pronounce the prophecy unfulfilled even if the same Shebna holds high office in 701. Hezekiah

[1] 2 Kings xviii. 18. [2] 2 Kings xviii. 18.

[3] So Cheyne, Poly. Bib., p. 159; Driver, *L.O.T.*[6], p. 218; Dillmann, Jesaia,[6] *in loc.* Kittel says very truly that we have no ground for asserting that the office of scribe was lower than that of house steward (*Königsbücher*, p. 282).

must have looked with favour upon this servile creature. Yet he dare not wholly disregard the prophet's attacks. But after Shebna's removal from office, and the consequent quieting of the clamour, the king could easily appoint him to another post. Isaiah's desires may have thus been thwarted for the time, but Shebna was not dead yet. Even though he may have held the post of secretary in 701, it does not follow that he ever occupied the tomb which had been so much concern to him. Stevenson's suggestion[1] that Isaiah's language was only intended as a special case of warning, "He putteth down the mighty from their seat," offers, I think, one of the less satisfactory solutions. We know that Shebna was degraded from office at the prophet's instigation; we do not know what became of him afterwards; but Isaiah certainly accomplished his main purpose, even if all of his predictions were not literally fulfilled.

Perhaps we should remember that a Hebrew prophet's "shall" is often equivalent to the modern "ought." Isaiah would thus mean that the shameless minister *ought* to be exiled and die in disgrace. That might be said of many men to-day who disgrace the high offices they hold. It is easy to cry out that they ought to be removed, and even we hear that they *shall* be relegated to other spheres; but many such hopes and predictions are ever unfulfilled.

Isaiah had stood strenuously against the attempt to overthrow the Assyrian supremacy. He had opposed all Babylonian, Egyptian, and Palestinian

[1] Hastings' *Bible Dict.*, art. "Shebna."

alliances. He believed that Judah should be faithful to the oath of allegiance which she had taken,[1] and he knew that Assyria was strong enough to exact obedience. In the early part of Sennacherib's invasion, the prophet was probably quiet. He saw and the people could see the abundant fulfilling of his warnings. Hezekiah was too shrewd to need a seer to cry in exultation, "I told you so."

For the Assyrian king was everywhere victorious when at last he invaded the West in 701 B.C. A single great leader always has an advantage over a coalition. The Assyrian knew how to press that advantage, and succeeded in breaking up the alliance so as to deal with the rebellious peoples in detail. With his first success several states, fearing the vengeance of the king and wishing to avoid the destruction of property incident to an invasion, and being quite hopeless of successful resistance, were prompt to sue for peace and make such terms as they could get. Hezekiah was one of the kings who apparently felt that he had gone too far to retreat, or who felt that he could resist long enough at least to secure better terms by treaty than by surrender. The Egyptian forces had been driven back; Ekron had paid a severe penalty for its deposition of Padi, an Assyrian appointee. The armies then invaded Judah. Both the Bible[2] and the inscriptions[3]

[1] This was not a mere principle of statecraft: an oath taken in the name of Jahveh could not be lightly broken, even though the bond was galling.

[2] 2 Kings xviii. f. = Isa. xxxvi. f.

[3] An English translation of these interesting inscriptions by Rogers may be found in *Records of the Past*, New Series, vol. vi.

tell the disastrous story. Forty-six[1] fortified cities were taken and annexed to other provinces. Jerusalem might hold out a long time, but resistance was not likely to restore the lost territory. Judah could not afford to be shorn of its towns; hence the king was constrained to send an embassy to Sennacherib at Lachish to make a treaty of peace. His message was humble enough in tone: "I have offended; return from me: that which thou puttest on me will I bear."[2] The Assyrian imposed a fine of three hundred talents of silver[3] and thirty of gold, which Hezekiah raised only by emptying both the royal and the sacred treasuries, and by stripping off the golden ornaments of the temple.

Still Sennacherib was not satisfied. He seems to have thought that Jerusalem was now so weakened and discouraged that it would offer no further resistance, and that he could wreak his vengeance upon its people as he had upon Ekron. The king sent his lieutenants with a great army to demand the surrender of the city. Hezekiah was in a sore strait. The great army before the city, the bold challenge of the Assyrians, the appeal to the people against the king, all tended to make his situation desperate. In his distress he turns to the very one whose counsel he had so long disregarded, Isaiah the prophet. Covered with sackcloth, Eliakim, Shebna, and the

[1] This number is given by Sennacherib. The Bible says the king of Assyria took "all the fortified cities of Judah" (2 Kings xviii. 13).

[2] 2 Kings xviii. 14.

[3] The Assyrian inscription says eight hundred talents of silver. It is generally supposed that three hundred talents Hebrew are equivalent to eight hundred Assyrian. See *K.A.T.*[3], p. 342.

elders of the priests are sent to the prophet to ask his intercession for the poor remnant of Israel.

Isaiah's words were full of encouragement to the perplexed king: "Be not afraid of the words that thou hast heard, wherewith the servants of the king of Assyria have blasphemed Me. Behold, I will put a spirit in him, and he shall hear tidings, and shall return to his own land."[1] Rabshakeh returned to his master, whom he found at Libnah, Lachish having fallen in the meantime, and reported Hezekiah's refusal to surrender. As Tirhakah was advancing with an Ethiopian army, Sennacherib was not in a position to invest Jerusalem. He therefore made another effort to secure a peaceful surrender by sending a threatening letter to Hezekiah. The king took this epistle to the temple and spread it out as if he would have Jahveh read the taunts of the blasphemous enemy. The answer of Jahveh came from the mouth of the prophet. It was God's own defiance of the perjured blasphemer: "The virgin daughter of Zion hath despised thee and laughed thee to scorn: the daughter of Jerusalem hath shaken her head at thee. . . . Because of thy raging against Me, and because thine arrogancy is come up into Mine ears, therefore will I put My hook into thy nose, and My bridle in thy lips, and I will turn thee back by the way by which thou camest. . . . Thus saith Jahveh concerning the king of Assyria, he shall not come into this city, nor shoot an arrow there, neither shall he come before it with shield, nor cast up a mound against

[1] 2 Kings xix. 6 f.

it. By the way that he came, by the same shall he return, and he shall not come into this city, saith Jahveh. For I will defend this city to save it, for Mine own sake, and for My servant David's sake."[1]

There can be no doubt that Isaiah's expectations about the collapse of Sennacherib's forces were fully realised. The Biblical accounts state that the angel of Jahveh went forth in the night and slew one hundred and eighty-five thousand men in the Assyrian camp; that Sennacherib returned to Nineveh, and was there assassinated by his sons while he was worshipping in the house of Nisroch his god.[2]

It ought to be plain that this story is not to be interpreted literally, as it is in Byron's well-known poem, "The Destruction of Sennacherib," and by some of the Biblical scholars, such as Rawlinson. The Hebrews ignored secondary causes, ascribing every event directly to God. The historian speaks indifferently of the punishment of David as a pestilence and as the direct work of the angel of Jahveh.[3]

Herodotus preserves a tradition[4] that at Pelusium field-mice ate the bowstrings of the Assyrians. But field-mice are a symbol of pestilence. If a disastrous plague broke out in the Assyrian camp, such as has demoralised many an army, that would satisfy both the Biblical story and Herodotus' tradition. Jerome accepted this interpretation.

[1] 2 Kings xix. 21, 28, 32–34.
[2] Isa. xxxvii. 36 ff.; 2 Kings xix. 35 ff.
[3] 2 Sam. xxiv. 15 ff. [4] ii. 141.

Winckler ignores this disaster altogether, asserting that Sennacherib was constrained to raise the siege of Jerusalem and hasten back to the East because of an invasion of Chaldeans and Elamites.[1] The Egyptians and the Hebrews alike claimed that they were saved from the Assyrians by Divine intervention. The fact is that Sennacherib retreated, leaving both Jerusalem and Egypt unsubdued. Isaiah was justified in his confidence, and must have appeared to the people the real deliverer of the people of God. They could not doubt that Jahveh had opened his eyes to see the future doom of the enemy of Judah and the blasphemer of God.

Just at this moment of his popularity we must leave this great prophet, who had laboured for forty years for the State, whose wise policy would have made a vastly different reading of history had it been faithfully followed. Even as it happened he was triumphant in the end, and Judah had still a possibility of recovery, a possibility which, as we shall see, she recklessly threw away. Whether Isaiah continued his prophetic activity or retired in the zenith of popularity we do not know. There is no prophecy of his which we can surely date after this time. The tradition preserved in the Mishna, that he was slain by Manasseh; or that in the Ascension of Isaiah, that he was sawn asunder, may be based on facts, but we have no good historic testimony as to his fate.

[1] *K.A.T.*[2], 80.

CHAPTER X

THE PROPHET'S RELATION TO THE STATE

III. JEREMIAH TO ZECHARIAH

THREE-QUARTERS of a century elapsed between the close of Isaiah's career and the beginning of Jeremiah's. Our knowledge of that period is very slight, and the little we know does not make an attractive picture. So far as our information goes, prophecy was silent. But we may easily infer the actual conditions. The prophets who saw visions according to the pleasure of the ruling kings were doubtless numerous, but their worthless effusions have found no record. Those who saw according to the visions of God were put to silence, even though the tomb alone could stop their mouths. We read that "Manasseh shed innocent blood very much, till he had filled Jerusalem from one end to the other."[1]

Doubtless the faithful prophets furnished their full quota of martyrs.[2] We can easily comprehend from this condition the fact that the prophets as a class in

[1] 2 Kings xxi. 16.

[2] See Jer. ii. 30. It is by no means impossible that Isaiah was a victim of Manasseh's bloody sword (see chap. ix.). Even Herod dared not put John to death openly, because the people esteemed him a prophet (Matt. xiv. 5; cf. xxi. 26, 46). Manasseh did not heed the natural protection which belonged to the office of prophet.

Jeremiah's time were leagued with the priests in subserviency to the civil power, and the further fact that Jeremiah assumed the prophetic office with great reluctance, and stood to his task only from an overwhelming conviction that it was God's will. The seer who proposed to see straight and tell what he saw was engaging in an extra hazardous task.

Yet Jeremiah began to prophesy in the peaceful days of Josiah, when the power of the State was on the side of righteousness and truth. He might well rejoice in that day, for it did not last long, and the rest of the prophet's life was strenuous and stormy.

What part our prophet played in Josiah's reformation it is not easy to say. If we could be sure of the accuracy of such passages as Jeremiah xi. 1–8 and xvii. 19 ff., we should know that Jeremiah was an enthusiastic supporter of the king's efforts. Both of these passages are rejected by Duhm and others, and not without some reason. There is the most convincing evidence that Jeremiah took little interest in Josiah's reforms. For when the book of the law was found, and the puzzled king in doubt as to his course of action, he sought counsel of the otherwise unknown prophetess Huldah,[1] rather than of the already well-established seer of Anathoth. The choice of Huldah is not explained by her being the wife of a temple officer ("the keeper of the wardrobe"), nor by Kittel's suggestion that Jeremiah was "still relatively young, and only later attained greater authority."[2]

[1] 2 Kings xxii. 14. The office was freely open to women; as Huldah had a husband, marriage was no impediment.

[2] *Die Bücher der Könige*, 1900, p. 299.

Jeremiah may have uttered his earliest oracles in Anathoth, as Duhm supposes; but the world is quick to hear a fresh voice, and after five years of prophesying this seer could scarcely be unknown.

Josiah's reform was largely external and destructive. Such methods as he adopted were necessary doubtless; but a young prophet, inspired with great ethical ideals, longing passionately for purity in the State, would naturally not be greatly interested in the smashing of images.[1]

In his earliest utterances Jeremiah reveals a clear idea of a state policy which was necessary, not merely for the welfare, but for the existence, of the nation. Israel was destined of God to be high among the peoples of the earth, not a servant, nor a home-born slave. Why, then, had he become a prey over whom the young lions roared? The answer was that he had forsaken Jahveh his God, and was at one moment consorting with Egypt, at another with Assyria.[2] Judah might have profited by the example of its sister kingdom, whose sins had brought it to destruction.[3] Notwithstanding the ruin of Israel and the low estate of Judah, the prophet in the eager years of his youth looked for a new national unity—Israel and Judah walking together in the land which God had given to their fathers.[4]

[1] Yet Jeremiah had a high opinion of the general beneficence of Josiah's reign; see Jer. xxii. 15 f.

[2] Jer. ii. 14 ff. [3] Jer. iii. 6 ff.

[4] Jer. iii. 18. The last two passages are rejected by Duhm. They are, however, explicable on the generally received theory that these passages, belonging originally to the Scythian invasion, were adapted to conditions of a later time.

Jeremiah's chief concern was the State as such. In his call he was set over nations and over kingdoms, not over individuals.[1] The grave peril of Judah was the subject of one of his inaugural visions, and his mission was to seek to avert the impending calamity.[2] The ground of his contention with the priests and prophets was not directly their deadly formal religion, but their blindness to the true interests of the State.[3] The ideas of our prophet about the State may be easily gathered from his arraignment of the various kings in whose reigns his lot was cast. The oracle concerning Jehoahaz affords us little light, but the contrast pointed out between the shameless Jehoiakim and his righteous father shows clearly what a king should be. Jehoiakim had ruled by harsh measures: he had followed the bad example of Solomon in his employment of forced labour; he had devoted his time to the building of palaces; he was addicted to covetousness, oppression, violence, and even murder. In God's kingdom no man could rule by such means. The result of his administration was that on the day of his death he would not be lamented as a king, but would "be buried with the burial of an ass, drawn and cast forth beyond the gates of Jerusalem."[4] These words are very bold, if we follow Duhm in placing them at the beginning of the king's reign, even though we agree with him that the last part was added after the burning of the roll. But the judgment was just, and the true prophet of God has only one measure for his words, not expediency, but truth.

[1] Jer. i. 10.
[2] Jer. i. 13 ff.
[3] Jer. viii. 8–12.
[4] Jer. xxii. 13 ff.

The judgment of Coniah,[1] or Jehoiachin, who reigned but three months before he was deposed by the Babylonian king[2] and Zedekiah put in his place, is equally severe. His fate is portrayed in the darkest colours, and it is quite inconceivable that Jeremiah could have expected anything good from his rule. He represents this king as utterly repugnant to Jahveh, and such repugnance could only be due to the king's failure to inaugurate his reign in righteousness.

It was inevitable that Jeremiah should come into conflict with the State. Men are not generally tolerant of plain speaking about their vices. During the main part of his prophetic life, Jeremiah was persecuted by State and Church alike. We shall follow him through some of those perilous days, when, with his life in his hand, he was leading a forlorn hope.

Jeremiah early found, like a much greater Seer of a later age, that "a prophet was not without honour save in his own country." The first attempt upon his life was made by his fellow-townsmen of Anathoth. They were incensed at his bold rebukes, and had no notion of stopping with such half-way measures as a mere command to cease from prophesying. Their plan was to "destroy the tree with the fruit thereof."[3] In some way, so notable as to be regarded by him as a special providence, the prophet had been apprised of the murderous plot,

[1] Jer. xxii. 24–30.

[2] Babylonia is now the great empire of the East, Assyria having fallen.

[3] Jer. xi. 18 ff.

and was able to avoid the danger, probably by a hasty flight to Jerusalem.[1] We can easily understand, even if we cannot approve, the hope he expresses: "I shall see Thy vengeance upon them."[2]

Early in the reign of Jehoiakim (609–598 B.C.), Jeremiah felt the hand of the religious leaders of the nation, and, strange to say, the civil power now saved him from their hands. This story, which we find in chapter xxvi., will come before us again in another chapter, but needs to be referred to here for the sake of completeness. The case against the prophet was his declaration that the temple would be destroyed,[3] which was to the Jews blasphemy,[4] a capital offence, and one of the charges brought against our Lord. The prosecutors were the priests and prophets and some of the people whom they had stirred up; the judges were the princes of Judah; Jeremiah was his own counsel. His defence was simply that the words he spoke were not his, but God's, and that they might do with him as they saw fit; but that if they took his life, they would bring innocent blood upon their own heads.[5]

Help came to Jeremiah from two unexpected quarters. First, the elders cited the case of Micah, who in the days of Hezekiah had prophesied similarly, and whose dire threats stirred up the king and people, not to shed the innocent blood of a servant of God,

[1] Jeremiah probably prophesied first in Anathoth; this plot may belong therefore to the very beginning of his career. The date is, however, quite uncertain. Cheyne places it after the death of Josiah (*Jeremiah, his Life and Times*, p. 107 f.).

[2] Jer. xi. 20.

[3] See Jer. xxvi. 6 f.; and cf. vii. 4 ff.

[4] Cf. 1 Macc. vii. 34–38.

[5] Jer. xxvi. 12 ff.

but to amend their ways and so avert the threatened calamity.[1] Secondly, we are told almost parenthetically that "the hand of Ahikam,[2] the son of Shaphan, was with Jeremiah, that they should not give him into the hand of the people to put him to death."[3] How much Jeremiah owed to the powerful intervention of Ahikam is shown by the fate of Uriah, a fellow-prophet. He was emboldened by Jeremiah's acquittal to speak in a similar strain. The king and princes even sent to Egypt, where he had fled for asylum, brought him back and put him to death.[4] The prophet who had no friends at court lost his life, but his blood was not shed in vain, for it is ever true that "the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Church."

In the fourth year of Jehoiakim, Jeremiah was saved from the royal displeasure, not by a powerful friend at court, though that help seems not to have been lacking, but by hiding. Baruch wrote at Jeremiah's dictation a résumé of the prophecies previously delivered. A year later, when the people were drawn to Jerusalem in great numbers to keep a fast, Baruch read the words of Jeremiah to the

[1] Jer. xxvi. 17 ff.

[2] Ahikam was a member of the deputation sent out by Josiah to inquire of Huldah about the newly discovered law (2 Kings xxii. 12); he was the father of Gedaliah, the royal governor of Judah after the capture of Jerusalem, to whose care Jeremiah was committed by the king of Babylon (Jer. xxxix. 14; xl. 5 ff.).

[3] Jer. xxvi. 24.

[4] Jer. xxvi. 20–23. Uriah could not have been brought back without the consent of the Egyptian Government; this extradition shows that Jehoiakim was disposed to lean on Egypt as a protection against Babylon (see *K.A.T.*[3], p. 278).

assembled people. Among the auditors of Baruch was Micaiah the son of Gemariah, and nephew of Ahikam, mentioned above.

Gemariah was evidently well disposed towards Jeremiah, even as his brother Ahikam had been. Not improbably he despatched his son Micaiah to the princes; for he saw that there was trouble for the author of the words that he had heard. Baruch was brought before the princes that they too might hear the book which was so full of omen. When they had heard the words of the book, they were frightened, and resolved to report the matter to the king.

Just what this book contained we do not know,[1] for it was burned by the king. That the second edition contained the same words is very likely; but we do not know positively that the alarming message has survived. But we shall not go astray in our inference that this book contained words of ominous import to the State: for that only would explain the alarm of the princes and their resolve to report the matter to the king.[2] They did not tell Jehoiakim because they wanted to get Jeremiah into trouble,[3]

[1] The character of the book is disclosed by the incidental quotation in Jer. xxxvi. 29: "Thus saith Jahveh, Thou hast burned this roll, saying, Why hast thou written therein saying, The king of Babylon shall certainly come and destroy this land and shall cause to cease from thence man and beast?" Duhm makes merry with this passage, which he attributes to a stupid editor. But why?

[2] See also Duhm *in loc.*

[3] The English rendering, they "said unto Baruch, We shall surely tell the king of all these words," gives a wrong impression: with the Greek text we must drop out "unto Baruch." The last clause may be rendered, "We shall have to tell the king of all these words." The Greek text gives a better reading for the whole verse: "And it

but because they wanted this king, like Hezekiah and Josiah, to take such steps as would avert the threatening danger, and so let the book accomplish its purpose.

That the nobles were free from animosity towards the author and at the same time doubtful about the repentant spirit of the slayer of Uriah, is clear from their counsel that Baruch and Jeremiah should seek shelter from the king's anticipated wrath by hiding.

The nobles apparently tried to break the news to the king gently. They did not carry the roll with them, but left it in the care of the scribe, not, I think, because they feared Jehoiakim would tear it in pieces, as Duhm suggests, but for the reason indicated: they probably hoped he would accept their statement of its contents. But they misjudged their man. He promptly sent Jehudi to fetch the roll and read it in his presence. Three or four pages showed the king what was coming; and his mind was made up quickly. As the book was unrolled, piece after piece was cut off and thrown into the brazier to burn. The king did this in spite of the efforts of some of his ministers to stay his impious hand.[1]

The king answered the threat of the prophet by burning his prophecies and by a vain effort to arrest

was when they had heard all these words, they took counsel one with another, and said, We must make all these words known to the king."

[1] These men may have been moved by friendship for Jeremiah; but it is more likely that they were influenced by the possible danger of treating so despitefully the sacred words of a man of God. Such oracles were generally received with veneration and respect.

both prophet and scribe.[1] He had decided on a policy of his own, and he would brook no interference from prophet or prince. The prophet had an answer ready for the king: "He shall have none to sit upon the throne of David: and his dead body shall be cast out in the day to the heat, and in the night to the cold."[2] Then Jeremiah set to work at once to replace the prophecies which had been destroyed, and to the restored book he added many words of similar import.[3] The issue was fairly drawn. Never again while Judah stood would a true prophet be free to utter the message of Jahveh without taking his life in his hand. For this time the prophet escaped; but his conflict with the governing power was soon to grow more intense.

Jehoiakim's reign came to an inglorious end in 598. He had rebelled against Babylon, but death spared him the bitter consequences of his folly, and reserved them for his son and successor, Coniah or Jehoiachin, who ruled but three months. There is one prophecy which belongs apparently to this period, and which shows how hopeless were the affairs of Judah.[4] Nehushta, the king's mother, seems to have had a large share in the government; and the prophecy is addressed to her as well as to her hapless son. The prophet warns them that there is no glory now in

[1] Jer. xxxvi. 23–26. [2] Jer. xxxvi. 30.

[3] Jer. xxxvi. 32b.

[4] Jer. xiii. 18 f. Duhm assigns this prophecy to the reign of Jehoiakim, on the ground that the unhappy short rule of Jehoiachin gave no occasion to Jeremiah to give a warning against pride. The reason does not seem to be very convincing, even though the conclusion may be right.

the crown of Judah, because the power of the State is broken, the land being overrun by hostile armies. The false friends in whom the people have trusted will now appear in their true light as enemies. There is nothing for this reign better than failure and disgrace.

The king of Babylon had incited Judah's neighbours to wage guerilla war.[1] Soon after the accession of Jehoiachin a Babylonian army laid siege to Jerusalem. Either because of the hopelessness of his situation, or because he thought he might save the city, the king surrendered, and was taken to Babylon as prisoner, with his mother, court officers, nobles, warriors, craftsmen ; in fact, "none remained save the poorest sort of the people of the land."[2]

This deportation had important consequences for Jeremiah. The people who had befriended him were carried away, and he was left to fight his battles alone. We have seen that twice during the reign of Jehoiakim, Jeremiah was saved by the kindly offices of the nobility. This class had not abandoned all hope of Divine intervention, and they had not been ready to disregard wholly the admonitions of a prophet whose messages bore unmistakable marks of Divine inspiration. With the disappearance of these people, Jeremiah lost his friends and supporters. In the reign of Zedekiah, who was appointed Babylonian vassal by Nebuchadrezzar, there was no class in the State to whom the prophet could look for sympathy and support.

But Jeremiah did not give up the struggle to save

[1] 2 Kings xxiv. 2. [2] 2 Kings xxiv. 14 ; cf. Jer. xxix. 2.

his country because he was left to stand alone. Early in the reign of Zedekiah embassies appeared at Jerusalem from Edom, Moab, Ammon, Tyre and Sidon, to make a league, whose purpose was to throw off the yoke of Babylon. Jeremiah saw plainly how hopeless such a project was. At the critical moment these states would not stand together, but would abandon the league to serve their own interests. And even if they had acted in concert, these combined powers were no match for Babylon. Moreover, Jeremiah knew that the punishment for further rebellion would be severe. Any attempt to get rid of the Babylonian yoke would only fasten it the tighter, and leave those who wore it less strength to bear. Hence he sends yokes to all the ambassadors, and declares to them that peace and safety are only possible as long as the vassalage is patiently endured. The prophet wore a yoke upon his own neck as a symbol of the submission which became every true friend of the poor remnant of Judah.[1] His efforts seem to have been successful, for there was no revolt in the early part of Zedekiah's reign, though it is likely that some sort of a league was made, which bore its disastrous fruit at a later day.

Those who had been carried to Babylon were restless, and were making those still in Judah restless by the feeding of the false hopes of an early return. Hananiah declared that within two years the exile would be over,[2] basing his prophecy not upon a revelation from heaven, but upon secret knowledge of promised aid from Egypt. To counteract this

[1] Jer. xxvii. [2] Jer. xxviii. 3 f.

mischief Jeremiah wrote letters to the exiles in Babylon,[1] telling them to build houses and plant vineyards, and to marry wives, and even to pray for the welfare of the city under whose rule they were constrained to live, for their sojourn there would not be short, as the false prophets declared, but would last for the rounded-out limits of a human life. One Shemaiah was so incensed at this letter of Jeremiah's, that he wrote back urging his followers in Jerusalem to lay hands on the prophet who was proclaiming so depressing a message.

Acting under the instigation of Egypt, Zedekiah was at last led into rebellion. Instead of the Egyptian army, for which he hoped, the king beheld the reappearance of the hosts of Babylon in Judah. The obstacles which formerly had made the progress towards Jerusalem slow had been for the most part removed. There were few outlying cities to dispute the course of the army. Such as there were had long ago learned the advantage of discretion over valour. The poor weak king who had disregarded counsel when it would have done some good, eagerly seeks it now that it is too late. The hope that Jahveh might deal with Judah according to all His wondrous works[2] was vain now. The world has often before and since fed on that fatal delusion that man may sin to the very brink of the pit, and then demand of God salvation by a miracle. The result is too often the scepticism which abandons all hope with the cry "miracles do not happen."

The answer of the prophet is very crushing to the

[1] Jer. xxix. [2] Jer. xxi. 2.

king's hopes. Jahveh will even blunt the edge of the poor arms wielded against the foe, for Jahveh is on the side of the king's opponents. The people of the city shall die of a great pestilence, and Zedekiah the king, and those who survive the disasters of the siege, will be carried away as prisoners.

The people of Judah were greatly elated by the news of the approach of an Egyptian army. The Babylonians knew that this rescuing force must be crushed, and to do it easily and effectively, the siege was raised temporarily, and the whole army marched off to meet the new enemy. Zedekiah apparently had great hopes that this was a permanent deliverance, that the Babylonians would return to the siege no more. His inquiries of the prophet did not encourage his hopes. Jeremiah declared that Pharaoh's army would be driven back to Egypt, and the Chaldeans would return to the investment of Jerusalem, and capture it and destroy it. There were no conditions now to invite another such experience as the overthrow of Sennacherib.

During the early stages of the siege an incident happened which tells very forcibly the true situation in the city. Jeremiah's words were being fulfilled, and he had for a short period a commanding influence. He had insisted that the Babylonians could not be turned back by the sword, nor the city saved by Egyptian troops, but only by righteousness and the fear of the Lord. He had induced the princes and rich men to enter into a solemn covenant in the temple of the Lord to release their Hebrew slaves, which they had held, in defiance of the law, beyond

the limit of seven years.[1] As soon as the siege was raised, the people began to regret their rashness in sacrificing property to appease an offended God. By an act of the most high-handed tyranny the recently freed slaves were again forced under the yoke. Never does this prophet appear to finer advantage than in his denunciation of the covenant breakers, while he again assures the people of the return of the besiegers and the utter destruction of the city.

Jeremiah's home was in Anathoth, a priestly city, a short distance from Jerusalem, from which, as a priest, he drew his living. During the siege he had been cut off from his support, and now that the way was open he starts out of the city to visit his home. Those who were smarting from his rebukes, and wished to silence his gloomy tongue, saw now their opportunity. In vain had he been accused of blasphemy; for the court had not sustained the charge. Now, however, he is arrested in the gate of Benjamin on the ground of desertion. Irijah, the captain who made the arrest, took his prisoner before the angry princes, where he was ordered to be chastised and put in the dungeon house, in which place he remained for many days; in fact, Jeremiah remained in prison nearly all the time that was left for the house of David. The princes, who had been Jeremiah's friends, were in Babylon; their successors would not stand his frank utterances, and were constantly engaged in an effort to effect his destruction. The king, too, though at times moved by fear to heed the prophet's appeal for liberty, was strongly

[1] Jer. xxxiv. 8 ff.

influenced by his treasonable utterances, and so kept him under restraint.[1]

Much as we admire the courage of Jeremiah, we must admit that it is easy to censure his persecutors unduly. For the prophet's counsel must at times have been fairly maddening to the deluded patriots who thought they might achieve the freedom of the State. From the beginning of the invasion Jeremiah counselled submission, and he constantly declared that the city would be taken and destroyed. The case of Judah was constantly pronounced hopeless: that judgment weakened the hands of the defenders seriously. But more than that, he actually advised individuals to desert to the enemy. "Unto this people thou shalt say, Thus saith Jahveh: Behold, I set before you the way of life, and the way of death. He that abideth in this city shall die by the sword, and by the famine, and by the pestilence: but he that goeth out, and passeth over to the Chaldeans that besiege you, he shall live, and his life shall be unto him for a prey. For I have set My face upon this city for evil, and not for good, saith Jahveh: it shall be given into the hand of the king of Babylon, and he shall burn it with fire."[2]

We need not be surprised that the princes demanded that the king put the prophet to death, on the ground that he depressed the spirits of the men of war and of all the people.[3] Indeed, it is quite certain that the princes were acting on something more than mere apprehension. Unquestionably many soldiers had

[1] See Jer. xxxii. 2 f.
[2] Jer. xxi. 8–10.
[3] Jer. xxxviii. 4.

already deserted the hopeless cause and made good their escape to the hostile lines. Jeremiah must have seemed to them no better than a Babylonian partisan. In fact, Nebuchadrezzar took that view. For when the city fell, he gave particular orders that the prophet Jeremiah should be free to go to Babylon or remain in Judah,[1] evidently feeling that the seer had aided materially in the conquest of the city. Jeremiah produced so great an effect upon Zedekiah that he shielded the prophet as best he could from the princes who persistently clamoured for his blood, and at one time declared that he was only kept from taking the prophet's advice to surrender by his apprehension that he would be abused by the Jews who had already deserted to the enemy's standard.[2]

The issue showed that the prophet was right and the princes wrong. The temper of a conqueror is such that the more obstinate the resistance, the more severe the punishment for rebellion. The pricks are always sharpest to him who kicks against them. If Zedekiah had surrendered, the city and temple would not have been ruthlessly destroyed. And when the king and his counsellors were hopelessly bent on bringing about the destruction of the city, Jeremiah still tried to save something from the wreck. He was pained to see so many innocent people suffering by the sword, famine, and pestilence. If the city was doomed, some of the inhabitants might be saved; for God cares vastly more for people than for cities and temples. To save them Jeremiah adopted the course, so certain to bring odium upon him, of advising

[1] Jer. xxxix. 11 ff.; xl. 2 ff. [2] Jer. xxxviii. 19.

individuals to consult their personal interest and surrender at discretion.

Space will not permit our tracing in detail the career of the prophet in the dark days following the fall of Jerusalem. He was at heart a true patriot, and elected to share the trying life of the poor remnant left in Judah, a life which proved to be far harder than that of the exiles. But the prophet could accomplish very little; a mad fatuity seemed to be in the blood of the Jewish people. Strife did not cease, nor wisdom rule. Jeremiah was dragged to Egypt finally by the small handful of zealots who fled from the dread hand of Babylon. If he had been left as free by his own people as he was by the Babylonians, he would still have stood by the rapidly decreasing number of poor Jews who clung to their native soil; and he might finally have gathered about him a small community who would have set God's will above personal fear and national prejudice. For some Jews still stuck to Jewish soil, and seem never to have been seriously molested. It may be said, by the way, that recent criticism has credited the Jews who never left Judah with the rebuilding of Jerusalem, rather than the returning exiles, as has generally been held.

One more word and then we must leave this, the most persecuted of all the prophets. His message was generally a gloomy one. In fact, the skies were so dark to his vision that he lays down the general principle in his controversy with Hananiah that the prophet who predicts evil is much more likely to be justified by time than the prophet who predicts

good.[1] Again, he himself became so weary of the constant reiteration of evil tidings so unwelcome to the people and so conducive to his unpopularity, that at one time he resolved to quit the gloomy task, and would, but for the fire in his bones, which, being kindled of God, man could not extinguish.[2] The condition of the State and people was such that no true-sighted seer could have descried any other outlook than the dark one pictured by Jeremiah. Nevertheless, there were moments when his supreme faith in God made him hope for better things. The great Messianic passage in chapters xxx.–xxxiii. is full of assurance that the coming golden age of Judah is not a dream. In the straitest days of the siege he was constrained, though very much against his will, to buy a piece of land then in the possession of the enemy. Afterwards his eyes were opened to see the meaning of his own transaction, that land would again have value in Judah, and buying and selling be resumed.[3]

Ezekiel, while still a young man, was carried away among the captives of 598 and taken to the river Chebar,[4] a large canal in Southern Babylonia, not far from Nippur, the site of the excavations carried on by the University of Pennsylvania. So

[1] Jer. xxviii. 7 ff.

[2] Jer. xx. 7 ff. This is the sort of statement which makes the reader feel sure that the prophet was inspired of God.

[3] Jer. xxxii.

[4] The location of the Chebar has been definitely settled by Prof. Hilprecht. See *Babylonian Expedition of the University of Pennsylvania*, ix. pp. 27 f., 76; and his *Explorations in Bible Lands*, p. 411 f.; also Toy's *Ezekiel* (Poly. Bib.), p. 93.

far as we know, Ezekiel's whole prophetic career was spent in Babylonia. In the fifth year of his captivity the visions of God first came to him, and his greatest activity as a prophet lasted only during the six years of Jerusalem's final throes.

Ezekiel, like Jeremiah, was both priest and prophet. The priestly element was not so lost in the prophetic as in the case of Jeremiah. Yet being in a strange land, in which the Lord's songs could not be sung, still less the sacred rites observed, there was no occasion for him to exercise the office of priest. Nor could he derive his support from the official revenues as Jeremiah did; for these were cut off in the exile. During the first four years of his exile, before he began to prophesy, he was very likely engaged in earning his living. Later on he had a house, and supported a wife, so that he was probably successful in his efforts.

Though living in Babylonia among the exiles, the interest of Ezekiel was centred chiefly in Jerusalem among the remnant left there. His book throws very little light upon the condition of the Jewish captives, because his mind was always wandering away to the holy city. He was kept well informed of the progress of events in Judah, and took pains to spread his knowledge among his fellow-exiles.

From the fact that he was so far away, and was unknown as a prophet to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, he could exercise little influence upon the course of events there. But communication between the Chebar and Jerusalem seems to have been free and prompt, surprisingly so, considering the time

and distance. We cannot explain Ezekiel's acquaintance with Judean affairs by any supernatural agency. The stream of intelligence must have flowed both ways, so that some of the Judeans must have known of the utterances of this prophet of the exile. But if Zedekiah, and still more the princes, disregarded the persistent and powerful voice of Jeremiah poured into their very ears, they were not likely to be much troubled by the distant echoes of a voice hundreds of miles away. Nevertheless, Ezekiel learned the hard lesson that the business of the watchman is to watch and to warn, without regard to the effect of his warning upon those for whose sake he stands guard. If Judah met her doom in spite of the prophet's voice, he was freed of responsibility; but if the seer did not declare the disaster which he foresaw, then the blood of the people would be required at his hand. So the faithful shepherd, far removed as he was from his flock, steadily strove to keep them in the way of safety.

Ezekiel seems to have tried to impress upon his fellow-exiles, as well as upon the inhabitants of Judah, the fact that there was no hope of a speedy return. This delusion needed to be shattered; for it would result in a hand-to-mouth existence among the people, and in the suffering which is an inevitable consequence of such a state. He does this by asserting most positively that not only will the exiles not return, but, as a consequence of the downfall of Jerusalem, they will be joined by those who now vainly seek the independence of Judah. We find Ezekiel's position fully stated in chapter vii., which

Toy has entitled "The Doom of the Nation." But Ezekiel was too true a prophet to content himself with the cry of Jonah, "Within forty days this city shall be destroyed." The cause of the impending doom is fully stated, so that the people might turn and repent and so avert the catastrophe. There is no blind chance working against God's people. They are preparing to reap the whirlwind because they have sowed the wind. In the end the disaster comes from the hand of their own Jahveh, not from Bel or Nebo.

Such a discouraging message as this would certainly make Ezekiel unpopular among the exiles, as it had made Jeremiah unpopular in Jerusalem. But the exiles were abler men than the remnant in Judah. They early saw tendencies which pointed to the complete fulfilment of the dire predictions, and the prophet was constantly sought for advice as to the course of events. The moment the elders came to him the prophet is lifted up in spirit,[1] and his mind is turned to the evil which he sees in Jerusalem. There the prophet beholds an image of a false god by the north door of the inner court of the temple;[2] a chamber in the temple where Egyptian worship was carried on in secret, the elders, and the son of Shaphan among them, joining in the desecration;[3] the women weeping for Tammuz

[1] "He put forth the form of a hand, and took me by a lock of my head; and the Spirit lifted me up between earth and heaven, and brought me in the visions of God to Jerusalem" (Ezek. viii. 3); which, being interpreted, is that the prophet enters the ecstatic state and sees a vision, showing him, however, the true state of things in Jerusalem.

[2] Ezek. viii. 3–5. [3] Ezek. viii. 10 11.

at the door of the north gateway;[1] and at the very door of the temple twenty-five men with their backs to the house of Jahveh and worshipping the sun as it rose in the east.[2] There could be but one result of such conditions, the final destruction of a sanctuary so defiled that the holy God of Israel could no longer abide there.

We know clearly from Ezekiel that there was a war party in Jerusalem whom he accused of devising iniquity and giving wicked counsel.[3] In his vision he sees twenty-five princes,[4] who say that it is not the time to build houses, but to buckle on the sword, assuring the people that the naturally strong fortifications would protect them, even as the caldron does the meat.[5]

Against this party the prophet lifts up his voice with strength. He paints in sombre colours the picture which will result from this policy: "Ye have multiplied your slain in this city, and ye have filled the streets thereof with the killed. I will bring you forth out of the midst thereof, and deliver you into the hand of strangers, and will execute judgments on you."[6] The prophecy was made more portentous by the fact that as Ezekiel was delivering his message against this party, his words were fulfilled by the

[1] Ezek. viii. 14. [2] Ezek. viii. 16. [3] Ezek. xi. 2.

[4] Toy says it is uncertain whether these are the sun worshippers of viii. 16; Davidson says they are not the same (Cambridge Bible *in loc.*); but the latter is probably wrong. To persuade the people to follow their mad advice the leaders must alienate them from the influence of the prophets of Jahveh. They could do this in no way more effectively than by leading them on to the worship of other deities. [5] Ezek. xi. 3. [6] Ezek. xi. 6 ff.

slaughter of one of its leaders, Pelataiah the son of Benaiah.[1] Because Ezekiel sees these things in a vision, we are not to infer that there is no reality. The prophet is describing actual occurrences in Jerusalem, and the vision is merely the form he chooses for his message. Very likely he had already heard of the death of Pelataiah, and takes this opportunity to announce the fact. There are admitted difficulties in any explanation, but the simplest is not unlikely to be correct. It is unnecessary to call in the aid of telepathy, miracle, or illusion. The death of one of the war lords was an impressive warning for those who leaned towards useless resistance, and Ezekiel makes a dramatic and effective use of the fact.

The exiled prophet takes every opportunity to impress upon his hearers the certainty of the ruin of Judah. He collected the goods in his house, as if going into exile, and at night, with a bandage on his eyes, he carries the stuff away on his back,[2] to the astonishment of the confused exiles.[3] The next day the prophet explains the significance of his strange actions. "The burden refers to the prince in Jerusalem,[4] and all the house of Israel. They shall

[1] Ezek. xi. 13.

[2] Toy says, "It is doubtful whether such acts as these were really performed" (Ezek. *in loc.*). It does not seem to me doubtful. The Orientals indulge freely in symbolic prophecy, and Ezekiel is especially addicted to it. There would be no force in the prophecy without the symbolic acts.

[3] Ezek. xii. 3–7.

[4] It is noteworthy that, except in vii. 27, which Toy explains rightly as a scribal addition, Ezekiel calls Zedekiah *prince*, not *king*. The exiles looked upon Jehoiachin, living with them in captivity, as their real sovereign.

go into exile. And the prince that is among them shall bear upon his shoulder in the dark, and shall go forth. He shall cover his face, because he shall not see the land with his eyes.[1] I will bring him to Babylon, to the land of the Chaldeans ; yet shall he not see it though he shall die there." [2]

Ezekiel announces the fearful doom of Zedekiah not as a mere fact, still less with any marks of pity ; for he regards him as the victim of his own folly. This is clearly shown in the fine allegory of the Eagles and the Cedar of Lebanon.[3] The prophet shows here his acute ethical sense. One of the gravest charges against Zedekiah is that he is a covenant breaker, and God loves no false oath. Zedekiah was set on the throne by the king of Babylon, to whom he had sworn a solemn oath of fidelity in the name of Jahveh. Yet he covenanted with Egypt and violated his oath: "Shall he prosper? Shall he escape that doeth such things? Shall he break the covenant and yet escape? As I live, saith the Lord Jahveh, surely in the place where the king dwelleth that made him king, whose oath he despised, and whose covenant he broke, even with him in the midst of Babylon shall he die." [4] The oath to Nebuchadrezzar, sworn in the name of Jahveh, was Jahveh's oath, and He will punish the king as one breaking faith not merely with a foreign tyrant, but with God Himself.[5]

[1] Zedekiah was brought before Nebuchadrezzar at Riblah, and his eyes put out, after witnessing the slaughter of his sons (2 Kings xxv. 6 f.).

[2] Ezek. xii. 8–13 in part.

[3] Ezek. xvii.

[4] Ezek. xvii. 15 f.

[5] Ezek. xvii. 19.

Enough passages have been cited to show how carefully Ezekiel watched the downward course of the city of Jerusalem, and how gladly he would have stopped it. But nations, like individuals, are held strictly responsible for their acts. Zedekiah and his deluded followers were not paying the penalty for the sins of their forefathers, but of themselves. The lower the estate of the nation politically, the lower it became morally, and thus Divine intervention was made impossible. The people must sink lower before they could begin to rise. The devastation of Judah must be complete before the process of restoration could become possible.

Ezekiel looked for the complete ruin of the State, but he never regarded the catastrophe as final. God tore down and God would build up. The moment Jerusalem is laid waste, Ezekiel loses all interest in the ruins, and lets his mind soar freely in the distant future when the rebuilding will have become an accomplished fact. Up to the moment of the fall of Jerusalem the prophet had been engaged in killing false hopes. From that very day he began to kindle real ones. The people who had been so blind to their peril could see that much now. Before they had exaggerated their power; now they exaggerated their helplessness. So it is always. The man who can see things as they are has always the weary burden of correcting the vision of those who can only see things as they are not.

From the day when an escaped fugitive brought tidings of Zion's waste,[1] Ezekiel set his gaze to the

[1] Ezek. xxiv. 26.

future. In fact, he had been warned by a terrible blow that he was not to weep nor lament over the ruin, but to set about its repair. The prophet's wife died suddenly, and he was forbidden to indulge in any of those extravagant marks of grief which characterise the Oriental.[1] So the desolation of Judah was not to be occasion for idle grief, but for zealous work.

And there was need of brave souls at the crisis. They who could not believe in Zion's fall were completely crushed by the unexpected fact. The despondency was so great that the hopeless exiles cried, "Our bones are dried up, and our hope is lost: we are clean cut off."[2] Their cry of despair gave the prophet his text for a sermon of hope. On their words he builds his vision of the resurrection of the dry bones. The dry bones with which the valley of his vision is strewn come together, each one finding its place in the frame to which it belongs; sinews grow upon them, and they are covered with flesh and skin; then the wind blows and brings the living breath into the restored bodies. So will be the history of the nation. The scattered fragments will be collected from the remotest corners of the earth and brought to the land of their fathers.[3] And in this resurrected people there will be neither division nor discord, but union and strength. Judah and Joseph will be welded into one people, just as the prophet twines two sticks together so as to make one stout staff. This people would be morally restored, and would acknowledge the one sovereign of the

[1] Ezek. xxiv. 15 ff. [2] Ezek. xxxvii. 11.
[3] Ezek. xxxvii. 12 ff.

house of David. Jahveh would make a covenant of peace with them, which would be an everlasting covenant.[1]

We must move forward about half a century from this glowing prophecy to its fulfilment in the days of Haggai and Zechariah. The actual condition of Jerusalem was very mean compared to the Messianic pictures which had been painted long in advance. So it often happens that the fulfilment of God's promises seems very poor compared to the expectations raised; but that is generally due to man's inability to interpret his own time and his own experiences.

A number of modern scholars have thrown grave doubt upon the return of the exiles as told in the book of Ezra, holding that the Jews of the restoration were those who had always remained on Judean soil. I shall hope to show in another place that there is much truth in the history in Ezra, but that does not concern us now. Our problem is to see the part played by the prophets in the rebuilding of Judah and Jerusalem. If we read the little books of Haggai and of Zechariah, we can see that these prophets, while far inferior to their great predecessors, yet had the advantage of a more submissive people to deal with, so that the influence of the prophets was paramount. In the main the post-exilic seers undertook an easier task than fell to the lot of their predecessors, for it is vastly easier always to rouse people to build a temple than to lay aside their sins. Haggai was concerned almost wholly with the rebuilding of the temple, feeling very rightly that the house of the

[1] Ezek. xxxvii. 16 ff.

Lord was essential as a central rallying point for the people. The reconstructed temple, which was, so far as our records go, the fruit of Haggai's prophetic activity, made possible the larger work of Nehemiah. In the actual work priest and governor worked shoulder to shoulder, but it was the voice of the prophet which roused them to action.[1] As a reward for Zerubbabel's obedience, the prophet declares that the governor is a signet and the chosen of Jahveh.[2]

Zechariah's visions are for the most part symbolic of the new era about to dawn on Judah. First we have the horsemen among the myrtle trees who have come from a tour of the earth, and report that "all the earth sitteth still, and is at rest."[3] The time is propitious. There are no disturbing wars to prevent the peaceful development. The Jews need no longer fear the harassing invasions of foreign armies. Then there is greater hope because Jahveh is now on the side of His people: "Cry thou, saying, I am jealous for Jerusalem and for Zion with a great jealousy. I am returned to Jerusalem with mercies; My house shall be built in it, saith Jahveh of hosts, and a line shall be stretched forth over Jerusalem. My cities shall yet overflow with prosperity; and Jahveh shall yet comfort Zion, and shall yet choose Jerusalem."[4]

[1] Hag. i. 12 ff. Ezra v. 2 says that the prophets of God helped the temple builders. Siegfried, who supposes the prophets to be Haggai and Zechariah, renders "supported" them. But the reference may be to the sons of the prophets aiding in the actual labour.

[2] Hag. ii. 23; cf. Ecclus. xlix. 11.

[3] Zech. i. 11.

[4] Zech. i. 14 ff.

The vision of the man with a measuring line conveys much the same message. The city would be measured and found to be too small for the great population which would gather in her borders. The people would overflow the walls and yet be safe; for Jahveh Himself would be a wall of fire round about, and so afford ample protection to the inhabitants.[1] This large population would be due not only to the natural increase, though that was a characteristic of the new Jerusalem;[2] but large additions would also be made by the return of the exiles, who were now free to depart, and whom the prophet exhorts to seek the home of their fathers.[3] Even strangers would take up their abode in Jerusalem, an element of national life and strength which the prophet cordially welcomes.[4]

The vision of the golden candlestick with seven burners was meant as a personal encouragement to Zerubbabel. Mountains of difficulty stood in the way of the governor. The desolate ruins, the sparse population, the poverty of the people, the lack of general interest and enthusiasm, all combined to make the outlook dark. Out of such materials it must have seemed almost impossible to construct an empire in any way worthy of the ancient glory of the house of David. The prophet does not in the least attempt to minimise the obstacles; but rather to show how they are to be overcome. The meaning of the vision is that Zerubbabel is to look for success not to might nor to power, but to the Spirit of the Lord.[5] Just

[1] Zech. ii. 1–5. [2] Psalms cxxvii., cxxviii.
[3] Zech. ii. 6 ff. [4] Zech. ii. 11. [5] Zech. iv. 6 ff.

as the lamps are kept perpetually burning by the flow of golden oil from the olive trees, so is the governor to be always sustained in his mission by the pervading presence of Jahveh's Spirit. And that being the case, the prophet can confidently assert that as Zerubbabel has begun the rebuilding of the temple, so he shall accomplish its completion.

Finally, there is the splendid prophecy of the golden age with which Zechariah's message ends.[1] The conditions of life will be so propitious that men will live to a ripe old age.[2] The city will be so secure that it will be full of boys and girls playing freely in the streets.[3] The fruitfulness of the land shall not again be withheld, nor the heaven keep back the dew and rain; the present dearth shall be followed by an era of plenty, so that Judah will be a blessing to the whole earth.[4] But the fame of Jerusalem will not rest in its walls, nor in its dense population, nor in its wealth, but in the power and beneficence of its God. So great will Jahveh's reputation become, and so eager are men to find God—a fact for all ages and all peoples to grasp and use—that every returning exile will find himself beset by men of all nationalities, determined that he shall guide them to Zion, because of the news that God is there.

With this beautiful picture, which, alas! has never yet been fully realised, but which is ever ready for a complete realisation wherever and whenever man

[1] Zech. viii.; ix.–xiv. belong to other authors.
[2] Zech. viii. 4; cf. Psalm lv. 23.
[3] Zech. viii. 5.
[4] Zech. viii. 12 f.

shall learn that God is the greatest power in a State, and that the State may show the presence of God in its institutions and in its people, I must bring to a close the long study of the prophet's relation to the State.

It is interesting to note that the two eras when the prophet's political influence was perhaps greatest were the reign of Hezekiah, and the beginning of the restoration; that is, when Jerusalem was at the height of its glory, and when its fortunes were at the lowest ebb. But there was never a time when the prophets were not solicitous in the national interests, nor when they did not speak their mind freely about political affairs.

CHAPTER XI

THE PROPHET'S RELATION TO THE CHURCH

I. THE EARLY PERIOD

WHEN our Lord had a rebuke to administer, He did it directly, plainly, and unmistakably. Those who came in for the greatest share of His censure were not, however, the poor, the ignorant, and the sinful; but the rich, the learned, the self-righteous—the Scribes and Pharisees. For example, we recall these words: "Ye witness to yourselves, that ye are the sons of them that slew the prophets"; "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, which killeth the prophets, and stoneth them that are sent unto her."[1] These are surely hard words, and their severity is not lost because we feel the tender pathos in the lament over Jerusalem. How St. Luke loves to dwell upon the persistence with which Jesus set His face steadily towards Jerusalem on the last long journey from Galilee! and how clear the motive becomes to us, as we recall the words spoken by the Master as He at length drew near the city: "Howbeit I must go on My way to-day and to-morrow and the day following: for it cannot be that a prophet perish out of

[1] Matt. xxiii. 31, 37.

Jerusalem."[1] The prophets who perished at Jerusalem had had a hard time of it in this world, and in a large degree the hardship of their lot was due to the Church from which they might have expected support and co-operation. For it was the fate of the prophet to die in Jerusalem, and that means that the Church would be the executioner.

The Epistle to the Hebrews tells us of the triumphant faith of the prophets; but it also tells the story of their triumphant sufferings: "Others had trial of mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment: they were stoned, they were sawn asunder, they were tempted, they were slain with the sword: they went about in sheepskins, in goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, evil entreated (of whom the world was not worthy), wandering in deserts and mountains and caves, and the holes of the earth."[2] Those who found this world an easy and pleasant road, Jesus differentiated from the true man of God by a significant adjective: "Woe unto you," He said to His disciples, "when all men shall speak well of you! for in the same manner did their fathers to the *false* prophets."[3]

The martyrs did not endure their sufferings in foreign lands, and at heathen hands; indeed, they were safest on strange soil; for their blood was shed in Jerusalem, and by their co-religionists. The point of danger to them was not places like the modern China or Turkey, where our missionaries have in our day shown the old power of faith, but at home and among their own people.

[1] Luke xiii. 33; Addn. note (12). [2] Heb. xi. 36 ff. [3] Luke vi. 26.

No suffering is so keen as that which comes from those from whom we have a right to expect sympathy and help. How true a note is struck in the Psalmist's cry :—

> "For it is no enemy that reproaches me;
> Or I could have borne it:
> Neither is it my hater that insults me;
> Or I would have hid from him:
> But it is thou, a man mine equal,
> My companion, and my familiar friend."[1]

If anything could justify the fierce imprecation which follows (ver. 15), it is just that situation. The hardest cross which Jesus had to bear was not the one laid on His shoulders on the way to Calvary, but the one eloquently described in those few words, "Neither did His brethren believe on Him"; and the other implied in His pathetic question, "Will ye also go away?"

We have been so long accustomed to look upon the great prophets of Israel as leaders of religion that we are apt to forget the bitter opposition they encountered in their day. They seem to us so truly to have been men to whom their contemporaries might well look up, that we quietly assume that the hungry people gaped with open mouth, quick to catch the crumbs of Divine counsel which fell from their lips. The passages I have cited warn us to look for a different story, and as a matter of fact the Old Testament tells us a different story. And it is to that story I now wish to call attention.

[1] Psalm lv. 12 f.

The prophets were opposed at times by the State, at times by the Church, and at times by both. My task now is to bring out the opposition between the prophet and the Church; for the relation was generally one of opposition. I use the word "Church" indeed in the loose sense, necessary in such a study as this, of the organised or established religion of the time. For the course of study sweeps over a long period, in some parts of which the Church was very different from what it was in other parts.

In our study of the sons of the prophets we have seen reason to believe that the prophetic guilds[1] were originally associated with sanctuaries, and therefore in close contact with the priests. These prophetic bodies seem to have remained faithful to the priesthood and to ceremonial religion all through Hebrew history. They were not only a part of the established religious institution, but were in sympathy with it. When we come to the great prophets who stand out for living truth against dead tradition, we shall see that these guilds were invariably on the side of the priesthood and rigid institutionalism.

The earliest of the conspicuous and worthy prophetic figures, such as Samuel, Nathan, and Elijah, were in name and in fact priests as well as prophets. Samuel began his career as an apprentice in the sanctuary, and it was there he received his first messages from God. Samuel was the head of the Jewish Church in his day. But Samuel remained loyal to the high ethical standard which belongs to prophecy. He would admit no lowering

[1] See chap. iv.

of the ideal such as that "the end justifies the means." The sharpest admonition is administered to king Saul, because he thought that Jahveh would willingly be propitiated for disobedience by the offering of a splendid sacrifice:—

> "Does Jahveh find pleasure in offerings and sacrifices
> As in hearkening to the voice of Jahveh?
> Behold, to hearken is better than sacrifice,
> And to give heed than the fat of rams."[1]

Elijah was engaged for the greater part of his life in a struggle to save the true Jewish Church from pollution by the introduction of foreign idolatrous elements. The prophetic guilds for the most part[2] and the priesthood were subservient to the royal power. They adopted the easiest and most profitable course, ready to offer sacrifice to any god,[3] or utter oracles from any deity, so long as the king approved and the devotees paid. Elijah's warfare against the king was also a warfare against the corrupt Church which he had set up in the Northern Kingdom. As we have gone over that ground pretty fully, however, it is unnecessary for us to traverse it again.

[1] 1 Sam. xv. 22. The theology of this passage is regarded as too advanced for the rude age of Samuel. H. P. Smith says, "The passage is a summary of later Jewish theology" (Sam. *in loc.*). If we admit the historic incident, then some such rebuke of Saul is appropriate.

[2] But we must not forget that there were brave souls among them, who died, and endured every kind of hardship, because they would not repudiate Jahveh (1 Kings xviii. 4). Yet Elijah alone was left with courage and power to resist the introduction of the Baal-worship (1 Kings xviii. 22; xix. 10).

[3] Even in Judah at a much later day Urijah the priest did not scruple to build a new altar according to the pattern sent by Ahaz from Damascus (2 Kings xvi. 11).

Other prophets of this early period raised their protesting voice against the idolatrous tendencies. There is one particularly interesting case, though the prophet's name is unknown to us, and was even unknown to his biographer.[1] Jeroboam knew the danger to political independence of religious subjection to a foreign power,[2] but he took a bad way to accomplish a good result. He set up bullock images at Dan and Bethel, and commanded the people to worship them.[3] At first the cult was apparently not very popular; for the king could not find priests willing to serve at his strange altars, and was reduced to the necessity of consecrating to that office any that were willing to do his will.[4] It is possible that the unpopularity may have been greatly increased by the public denunciation, which we shall now describe.

The king himself was standing by his new altar at Bethel, in the act of burning incense to the bull image of Jahveh, when a "man of God from Judah" appeared on the scene, and addressed the altar thus: "O altar, altar, thus saith Jahveh, Behold, a son shall be born to the house of David, Josiah[5] by

[1] The story is found in 1 Kings xiii.

[2] This was the real cause of the English Reformation.

[3] 1 Kings xii. 26 ff.

[4] 1 Kings xiii. 33 f.

[5] The mention of this name and the prediction in which it is imbedded (cf. 2 Kings xxiii. 15 ff.) show that in its present form this narrative was written very long after the events. But there is an older folk-story woven into the passage, and back of the written form are actual occurrences such as I have suggested in the text. When the story was first written down, the names of both prophets had already been forgotten.

name; and upon thee he shall sacrifice the priests of the high places who burn incense upon thee."[1] Jeroboam stretched forth his hand to seize the bold seer, but his arm was paralysed, and the ashes poured from the altar, according to the sign given by the man of God. At the king's plea and by the prophet's intercession his hand was restored, but the seer could not be induced to accept the royal hospitality proffered; for he had been straitly charged not to pause to eat or drink, nor to return the same way he came.

Good would it have been for that seer if he had obeyed his instructions. It was no evil spirit which led him astray, but a fellow-seer who was more interested in the kingdom of Samaria than in the Kingdom of God. This aged prophet followed the man of God, and persuaded him, by a story of an angel message, that God charged him now to return to eat bread. When the seer yielded to his aged brother, he was greeted with a reproach for his disobedience and a prediction of his disastrous end. The prediction was soon fulfilled, for after the feast the seer started for Judah, and was devoured on his way by a lion.[2]

It is easy to point the moral of this interesting old story, and to divine the actual facts on which it is based. The true prophet can never trust any vision but his own. Yet it was very pleasant for the seer to believe God had changed His orders, because another and older prophet had said so, especially as food and rest are always agreeable to the weary;

[1] 1 Kings xiii. 2. [2] 1 Kings xiii. 24.

but unfortunately for him, God cares more for right than for ease.

The strait command that the prophet should neither tarry in Israel nor return as he went was designed to insure his safety. His errand was perilous; Jeroboam could be contrite enough till his hand was restored, but would soon forget his punishment in his determination to brook no interference with his religious programme. Though himself unable to allure the seer to peril, one of his prophets was more successful, for there can be no doubt that the old prophet deliberately set the fatal trap. The lion which met the seer in the way was undoubtedly an assassin who had been appointed to lie in wait. It is to be said to the credit of the old prophet that his subsequent actions show a sincere contrition for the infamous part he had played.[1]

Even from the priesthood we find an occasional voice lifted up against the prevailing religious corruption. The Chronicler tells the story of the martyrdom of Zechariah the son of Jehoida,[2] the priest who saved the house of David. The priest's recorded words are few, but he said enough to show his understanding of the times that there was much misfortune because there was much sin. Short shrift was given

[1] The bones of both these prophets were left undisturbed by Josiah when he was fulfilling the prophecies of this man of God (2 Kings xxiii. 17 f.). Whether his motive was veneration or superstition it is not easy to say.

[2] 2 Chron. xxiv. 2 ff. It is a prevalent fashion to reject all unsupported stories of the Chronicler. It must be admitted that he has a habit of putting events in the wrong place, and is prone to exaggerate; but some of his stories may be true for all that.

the priest; he was stoned to death by the mob, the king, whom the martyr's father had placed on the throne, aiding or abetting the atrocity.

Naturally we shall find the most copious and interesting material for our study in the canonical prophets. To them we now turn. When Amos went to Bethel he could make no pretence that there were no prophets in Samaria that he must needs go from the furthest bounds of Judah, nor that there was no religion in the Northern Kingdom. Prophets and religion were there, and this is Amos's opinion of the whole system: "Come to Bethel, and transgress; to Gilgal and transgress again; and bring in your sacrifices every morning, and your tithes every three days; and make a thank-offering of leavened bread, and publish generous offerings,[1] yea, make them heard: for thus you love to do, O sons of Israel: oracle of the Lord Jahveh."[2] The worthlessness of this sort of religious rites, performed with punctilious fidelity, is shown by the prophet's oft-repeated cry which follows immediately: "Ye have not returned unto Me, oracle of Jahveh." Sacrifice was one thing, approach to God another. The people had to learn the great lesson which even the Christian world is slow to grasp, that God's earthly sanctuary and God Himself are not necessarily the same. "Thus saith Jahveh to the house of Israel, Seek Me and live: but do not seek Bethel, nor enter Gilgal, nor pass over to Beersheba" — though those were famous

[1] Perhaps "liberalities," as G. A. Smith renders. The idea is the advertising of their generous contributions to religion.

[2] Amos iv. 4 f.

sanctuaries, where the people had been long wont to suppose that God was sure to meet them, and which they deemed safe under His protection; so the prophet goes on to say, "for Gilgal shall surely become an exile, and Bethel shall come to nought."[1]

The people observed the letter of the law, but were blind to its spirit. There were people who cried, "How long ere the new moon will be gone, that we may sell corn? and the Sabbath, that we may set forth wheat?"[2] Is it surprising that the prophet should cry out hotly against such religious practice as this? Can we doubt that Amos knew the mind of God when he represented Jahveh as exclaiming: "I hate, I scorn your feasts, and I delight not in your sacred assemblies. If you offer Me your offerings of flesh and meal I will not favour them; neither will I regard your fat peace offerings. Take away from Me the noise of thy songs, and let Me not hear the melody of thy viols"?[3]

The question is ever raised about such passages, whether the antagonism of the prophets is against the ceremonial system as such, or only against the abuse of it, which certainly was common enough. It is neither possible nor necessary to discuss that question at length here.[4] It is certain that there was pretty strenuous antagonism between the prophetic and priestly systems. It is now generally conceded that the great bulk of the so-called priestly legislation was post-exilic; but it is certain that priestly

[1] Amos v. 4 f. [2] Amos viii. 5. [3] Amos v. 21 ff.

[4] See the writer's *Old Testament from the Modern Point of View*, p. 155 ff. W. R. Smith, *O.T.J.C.*[2], lect. x.

institutions existed from very early times in Israel. Samuel was both prophet and priest at the beginning, and Ezekiel was both at the end of the great historic period of Israel. In the intervening time the prophets set their face against the system, either because they did not recognise it as of Divine origin, or because it had lost its primitive ethical motive. Amos seems to show clearly enough what he thought about the origin of the system, for he asks, "Did you bring Me sacrifices and offerings in the wilderness forty years, O house of Israel?"[1] The period under Moses was looked upon as the golden age of God's favour to His chosen people.[2] The Divine grace was not bought by a prescribed measure of sacrifice offered according to a minute ritual, for Amos asserts that no sacrifices were offered in the desert. Surely he could not believe that Moses wrote the priestly laws of the Pentateuch[3] at that period. What God wants is shown clearly when the prophet demands that "justice roll down as waters, and righteousness as an everflowing stream."[4]

It is certain that the priests of Israel did not look with favour upon the free speech of this untutored prophet. Amaziah, the priest of Bethel, was troubled with these utterances, and called in the royal authority to silence the speaker. He interrupts the humble preacher with persuasive sarcasm: "O seer,

[1] Amos v. 25. [2] Amos ii. 10.

[3] See also the passage of Jeremiah quoted below.

[4] Amos v. 24. Ottley says very truly: "Some of them [the prophets] appear to represent it [sacrifice] as a concession to spiritual immaturity; all of them speak of it as wholly subordinate to moral obedience" (*Bamp. Lect.*, p. 230).

come, flee thee away to the land of Judah, and there eat bread, and there prophesy; but at Bethel do not prophesy again, for it is a royal sanctuary, and it is a royal house."[1] The example for all prophets to follow was set once for all by this first prophet[2] whose words have been preserved. He begins with an *apologia:* "I am not a prophet, nor am I one of the sons of the prophets: but I am a herdman, and a dresser of sycamore trees." He thus reminds Amaziah that he did not belong to the order of established prophets, possibly under a vow of obedience to king or priest, but received his commission in such a way that obedience to the priestly mandate, even though supported by royal authority, was impossible: "Jahveh took me from the flock, and Jahveh said unto me, Go, prophesy unto My people Israel."[3] In other words, Amos was not pleading his disadvantages in not having a prophet's education and position, but rather explaining his superior position to the members of an institution who were bound hand and foot. No prophet can ever wear fetters. Amos was prophesying, not by virtue of a commission sealed by human authority, but by the direct call of God. He proclaims the unwelcome truth, not because he likes contention and unpopu-

[1] Amos vii. 12 f.

[2] Yet we must not forget the words of Micaiah the son of Imlah, when his friendly advisers asked him to confirm what the other prophets had foretold: "What Jahveh saith unto me that will I speak" (1 Kings xxii. 14); nor the words of Balaam, anxious as he was to win the rich prize offered by the king of Moab: "If Balak would give me his house full of silver and gold, I cannot go beyond the word of Jahveh my God, to do less or more" (Num. xxii. 18).

[3] Amos vii. 15. See further p. 57.

larity, but because he must obey God rather than men. God had started him, God alone could stop him.

Now and then, all through the ages, Jewish and Christian, there has arisen a great soul, who was not mistaken in his belief, that however he was connected with man-controlled institutions, the real source of his authority to speak was God Himself. Such men have generally met fierce opposition in their day, but they have never wavered in their work. They are the men who have lifted religion from the low plane to which it sometimes falls, and to whom the Church owes a debt which it usually pays in building their sepulchres. We may also confidently believe that there are thousands of humbler men, whose names are never known to but few, who are rightly conscious of the same high calling, and are equally faithful to their exalted trust.

Before we leave Amos, let us pause for a moment to ask the result of the attempt to silence him. He went right on with his preaching, forecasting a direful future for the misguided priest who was unable, because unwilling, to discern the voice of the Lord; he went right on with his denunciation of Israel's sins; he declared that so far from the temple's being a talisman of safety, God would stand by the sacred altar, and begin His work of destruction there; and at length finishing his message with some bright pictures of a new Israel in a new age. Then, his work done, we may surmise that he gladly returned to the little village of Tekoa, on the confines of the wilderness of Judah, and resumed the humble tasks of following the flock and dressing sycamore trees.

Hosea stands in marked contrast to Amos, as already pointed out, in that he was called, not to exercise a ministry temporarily, and then to lay it down for all time, but to give his life to it.

Hosea seems never to have come into conflict with the powers that be, political or ecclesiastical, in such a way that they attempted to restrict his liberty of prophesying, but that was not because he did not give them abundant excuse. No man was ever more strenuous in denouncing evil even when the culprits were high in ecclesiastical power. Priests and prophets alike come in for a full share of stinging rebukes. Let me venture to remind the reader that the prophets of whom he speaks were not upstarts, deluded by their aspirations for position, but were supposed to have a juster claim to popular recognition than he had.

He says to the priest, "Thou shalt stumble by day, and the prophet also shall stumble with thee by night."[1] Again he exclaims, "The prophet is a fool, and the man of the spirit is mad, because of the multitude of their iniquity and the greatness of the enmity. As for the prophet, a fowler's snare is in all his ways, and enmity in the house of his God."[2] These deceivers and time-servers stand in their true bad light; especially when contrasted with those who had really believed God's word. God had "hewed them [His people] by the prophets, and slain them by the words of His mouth."[3] Again God says, "I have spoken unto the prophets, and I have multiplied

[1] Hosea iv. 5. [2] Hosea ix. 7 f.
[3] Hosea vi. 5.

visions; and by the hand of the prophets have I used similitudes."[1]

The priests were even worse than the prophets. "And it shall be, like people, like priest."[2] No wonder that the people were bad under such a priesthood; and the doom hanging over the people would involve the priests as well. Those who were called a "snare at Mizpah, and a net spread upon Tabor," were not only the masses, but the royal house and the priests.[3] For the priests do not stop short even of the most open crime: "As bandits lying in wait, so the company of priests murder on the road to Shechem; yea, they commit outrages."[4]

The religious rites performed by such priests and such people will avail nothing: "They shall not pour out wine unto Jahveh, neither shall they arrange sacrifices for Him; their bread shall be like the bread of mourners."[5] "Israel is a spreading vine: according to the abundance of his fruit, he has increased his altars." But what good is prosperity? for "their heart is divided; surely they will be found guilty."[6] But the sum of the whole matter is put in one of those fine utterances which God now and then breathes into the soul of man: "I desire mercy and not sacrifice, and knowledge of God more than burnt offerings."[7]

Amos and Hosea both prophesied in the Northern

[1] Hosea xii. 10. [2] Hosea iv. 9.
[3] Hosea v. 1. [4] Hosea vi. 9.
[5] Hosea ix. 4; making two slight but necessary emendations, after G. A. Smith, Wellh., Kuenen, Marti.
[6] Hosea x. 1 f. [7] Hosea vi. 6.

Kingdom, where the religion of Jahveh was at a low ebb. We turn now to Judah and to the prophets whose life and work lay in that kingdom. We will first glance for a moment at Micah, the rural contemporary of Isaiah. He was familiar with those who would suppress unpleasant truths, but he was unmoved by their opposition: "Prate not, thus they prate: let none prate of these things; revilings are unceasing."[1] The evil prophets took the lead in trying to silence the honest and fearless voice. Sinful people soon weary of having their sins laid bare. We occasionally yet hear a preference expressed for preaching about the goodness of God, rather than of the sins of men.

Micah had something to say about a class of prophets who exist in every age, who make their message conform to the standards of men, rather than to the standards of God: "Thus saith Jahveh about the prophets who lead My people astray; who snap their teeth and cry, Peace; and whoso does not give for their mouths, against him do they proclaim war: therefore they shall have a visionless night, and darkness too intense for divination; and the sun shall set upon the prophets, and the day shall be black over them. And the seer shall be ashamed, and the diviners confounded: they shall all cover their lips, for there is no answer of God."[2] Preachers who care more for what goes into their mouths than for what comes out are an abomination unto the Lord at all times.

There is another passage in this little book which

[1] Micah ii. 6, after G. A. Smith. [2] Micah iii. 5–7.

I will quote here, though there is doubt whether it belongs to Micah or not.[1]

But to whatever period and to whatever man it is to be assigned, the ever-convincing internal evidence assures us that it was breathed into a human soul by the Spirit of the Lord. It points out unmistakably the sharp contrast between the popular religion with an appointed sacrifice to atone for every sin and the high ethical religion most pleasing to God. The passage represents a soul in a great struggle. A serious problem has to be faced. A man has sinned. His sin does not sit lightly upon him, but is seen in its true light. The soul's peace is disturbed; relations with God are broken—what is to be done? "Wherewith shall I come before Jahveh? Shall I bow myself before the high God? Shall I come before Him with burnt offerings, and with calves of a year old? Will Jahveh be propitiated with thousands of rams, or with ten thousand rivers of oil? Shall I give my first-born for a guilt offering: the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?" The questions are asked with all the fervour of a soul in deep distress, and yet in such a way as to show the various popular methods of relief. He knows the things that will not help; but the prophet does not let him rest in negations. The positive statement is clear, brief, and ethically beautiful: "He hath showed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth Jahveh require of

[1] Micah vi. 1–8. W. R. Smith long ago accepted Ewald's view that Micah vi., vii. 1–6, belongs to the age of Manasseh; he accepted Wellhausen's conclusion that vii. 7–20 must be dated in the Babylonian exile (*Prophets*, p. 439). G. A. Smith comes back to the conservative position and ascribes the passages to Micah.

thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?"[1]

Not all prophecies are to be found in the prophets' books. Some of the finest have come down in poetic form. There are several anti-sacrificial Psalms, whose authors were really seers. They show that the spirit of the prophets manifested itself in many ways.[2]

"I will not reprove thee for thy sacrifices;
And thy burnt offerings are continually before Me.
I will take no bullock out of thy house,
Nor he-goat out of thy folds.
Will I eat the flesh of bulls,
Or drink the blood of goats?"[3]

"For Thou delightest not in sacrifice; else would I give it;
Thou hast no pleasure in burnt offering.
The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit;
A broken and contrite heart, O God, Thou wilt not despise."[4]

Before leaving Micah, I must point out the best evidence that Micah produced a great effect on his age, greater than we can estimate from his book alone. The testimony of Jeremiah xxvi. 17–19 is of the first importance, and it shows us that the reforms of Hezekiah were traced to the influence of Micah rather than to Isaiah.[5] Micah's declaration that Zion would be

[1] Micah vi. 6–8.

[2] Peters thinks that some passages in the prophets, *e.g.* Jer. xx., show the influence of the Psalms (*The Old Testament and the New Scholarship*, p. 176 f.). Is it not rather the case that the Psalms show the influence of the Prophets?

[3] Psalm l. 8 f., 13. [4] Psalm li. 16 f.

[5] For Isaiah's part in the reform see chap. x.

plowed as a field, Jerusalem become heaps, and the mountain of the house as the high places of a forest,[1] had produced a great impression. The king and people took alarm, realising that the very centre of their religion could only be saved by amended lives. Therefore Hezekiah repented and instituted reforms. Yet it is easy to overdo the matter of exalting Micah's influence over Isaiah's. All that we learn elsewhere would indicate that Micah's preaching was little known in Jerusalem, while Isaiah's influence over Hezekiah was very great. The citation of the elders is easily explained by the similarity of subject. Jeremiah was in the toils for predicting the fall of the temple and city; but Micah had said the same thing and was not charged with crime.

[1] Micah iii. 12.

CHAPTER XII

THE PROPHET'S RELATION TO THE CHURCH

II. ISAIAH TO JOEL

ONCE more we turn to the greatest of all the prophets. Isaiah the son of Amoz was great as a teacher of religious truth; as we have seen, he was also great as a statesman. Perhaps his statesmanship was the most marked trait. He busied himself perpetually with the affairs of the nation, and frequently was in conflict with the king and nobles. He had much to say about the sins of the nation and the holiness of the Lord; but he had comparatively little to say about priests and prophets. Isaiah seems to have been brought up in the ordinances of the Jewish religion: he was in the temple when he saw the vision so graphically described by him, and which finally overcame his reluctance to take up the prophetic office. He spent a long life of at least forty years in that ministry.

Isaiah certainly was not unfriendly to the priests as such; for when he set up a tablet whose full meaning should be clearly apparent at a future day, he chose among the witnesses of his act "Uriah the priest."[1]

[1] Isa. viii. 2.

The prophet also was looked upon as exercising a proper mission in the world. When he declared that Jahveh would take away from Judah and Jerusalem those upon whom it rested, he enumerates the prophets along with the elder, the judge, the man of war, as being together those whose offices would be sorely missed in the State.

But both priest and prophet are severely censured when they are found indulging in drunken revels, as if strong drink were the kind of spirit by which the Lord stirred up His servants: "Priest and prophet reel through strong drink; they are swallowed up of wine, they are gone astray through strong drink; they reel in vision, they stumble in judgment." [1]

As I have before suggested, Isaiah was brought up under the pre-exilic sacrificial system, and may have continued in that all his life. But when he saw that the people were wont to depend upon sacrifices rather than a clean moral life, then his denunciation breaks out in strong words: "What is the multitude of your sacrifices to Me? saith Jahveh: I am sated with burnt offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts; and in the blood of bullocks and lambs and he-goats I take no pleasure. When you come to see My face, who required now at your hand to trample My courts? [*i.e.* with animals for sacrifice.] Bring no more vain oblations; incense is an abomination unto Me; new moon and sabbath, the convoking of assemblies,— I cannot endure; it is iniquity, even the solemn meeting. Your new moons and your appointed

[1] Isa. xxviii. 7.

feasts are loathsome, they are a burden unto Me, which I am weary of bearing."[1]

The reason of God's displeasure at this formal, soulless ritual is stated in a word: "Your hands are full of blood."[2] Those deluded people fancied they could wash out the deep stains in the blood of bullocks, even as many evangelical Christians have thought they could wash theirs out in the blood of the Lamb. I think that Isaiah could never have sung that once-common hymn:—

> "There is a fountain filled with blood
> Drawn from Emmanuel's veins:
> And sinners plunged beneath that flood
> Lose all their guilty stains."

What God demands is rightly seen and clearly stated by the prophet: "Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before Mine eyes; cease to do evil, learn to do well; seek justice, relieve the oppressed, deal justly with the fatherless, plead for the widow."[3] No sacrifice, no blood bath, can ever take the place of earnest moral endeavour. The prophet must take issue with his Church when he saw it sinking to an unworthy conception of God, as if His favours might be bought with blood.

One of the greatest dangers to the Church of God, whether Jewish or Christian, is unreality. We cannot escape this grave peril by adopting a ritual, nor by dispensing with ritual, but only by the most persistent and strenuous moral efforts. This danger was present in Isaiah's day; it was one of the things

[1] Isa. i. 11–14. [2] Isa. i. 15. [3] Isa. i. 16 f.

which made wide the gulf between God and His chosen people: "This people draw near Me, and with their mouth and with their lips honour Me; but their heart is far from Me, and their fear of Me is a commandment of men learned by rote."[1]

But there was another phase of the popular feeling which was worse than unreality, worse than merely formal sacrifices, and that was the attempt to force the prophets either to keep silence, or to conform their utterances to the wishes rather than the needs of the people. God pity the prophet of any age who must ask, not, What would the Lord have me say to my people? but, What will my people receive without offence? God pity the people who would not gladly hear the Lord's truth, even though it made them shake like reeds in the wind.

There were people demanding easy teaching in Isaiah's time, and there were prophets who heeded them; but the son of Amoz was not among them. "It is a rebellious people," he cried, "lying children; children unwilling to hear the teaching of Jahveh: who say to the seers, See not; and to the prophets, Prophesy not unto us true things, speak unto us smooth things, prophesy deceits."[2]

Messianic prophecy does not occupy the place it once did in Christian thought, because we have not yet adjusted ourselves fully to the new light. But a Messianic life appeals to us more forcibly to-day than ever before. Jeremiah, the humble priest of Anathoth, lived a Messianic life, filled on the one side with consecration to his Divine mission, and on the

[1] Isa. xxix. 13. [2] Isa. xxx. 9 f.

other with suffering due to the persecutions of those who did not respect the feelings of a peculiarly sensitive soul. In a bitter moment Jeremiah cried out that he had been deceived;[1] but he had no just reason to feel so, for he had been warned at the start of his prophetic career that he would encounter serious though not fatal opposition: "They shall fight against thee, but they shall not prevail against thee."[2]

The evil due to a great body of prophets more concerned to please the people than to know the will of God, was either greater in Jeremiah's day than in any other time, or else he felt the degradation of the prophetic office more keenly. For he has more to say against these lying prophets than anyone else. Sometimes he includes the priests in his condemnation: "A wonderful and horrible thing has come to pass in the land; the prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests bear rule at their hand;[3] and My people love it so."[4] "From prophet even unto the priest every one dealeth falsely. They have healed also the hurt of My people lightly, saying, Peace, peace, but there is no peace."[5] Prophet and priest were leagued for wrong, and the people eagerly grasped the comforting delusion.

This was one of the serious difficulties which the true prophet had to meet all the time. How could he persuade the people to accept the truth when other prophets were teaching falsehood? "Then

[1] Jer. xx. 7. [2] Jer. i. 19.

[3] That is, by their power. So the Chronicler assigns to the prophets the regulation of priestly duties (2 Chron. xxix. 25; cf. Dan. ix. 10). See additional note (4).

[4] Jer. v. 30 f. [5] Jer. vi. 13 f.

said I, Ah, Lord Jahveh! lo, the prophets are saying unto them, You shall not see sword, and there will be no famine for you: but I will give you assured peace in this place."[1] The answer was sufficient for Jeremiah—would that the people had seen its truth! "Then Jahveh said to me, A lie the prophets are prophesying in My name: I did not send them, nor did I give them a command, nor did I even speak to them: they prophesy unto you a lying vision, and divination, and a thing of nought, and the deceit of their own heart."[2]

In chapter xxiii. we find a severe indictment of the deceivers of the people with the formal heading "concerning the prophets." It is too long to quote, but I will give the substance in as few words as possible. The holy words of Jahveh are painful to me; for the people are deep in sin, and the prophet and priest are alike profane, even carrying their wickedness into the sacred temple. The prophets of Baal led Israel to her doom, and the prophets of Jerusalem are no better, for they commit adultery, walk in lies, and strengthen the hands of evil-doers. The people are warned not to listen to the misleading words of their deceivers. They love to cry, "Thus saith Jahveh," but Jahveh sent no message by them; they love to cry, "I have dreamed, I have dreamed," but their false visions cause God's people to forget His name. These prophets have no word from God, and steal it every one from his neighbour —clerical plagiarism, it seems, is as old as it is abominable. The prophetic cry, "the burden of

[1] Jer. xiv. 13. [2] Jer. xiv. 14.

Jahveh," has been so dragged down by their lying visions, that Jahveh forbids its utterance any more.

At a critical hour in Judah's history, Jeremiah stood before king Zedekiah. The king, though owing his crown to the king of Babylon, vainly thought that he was strong enough safely to violate his oath of allegiance to Nebuchadrezzar. The host of prophets, whose chief concern was the royal favour, easily found messages to support his conviction. Jeremiah had no such delusion. He breaks in on the conference engaged in planning a confederated revolt, telling them that they must wear the yoke of the king of Babylon. No confidence is to be placed in the prophetic assurances, for they prophesy lies; they were not sent by the Lord.[1] Jeremiah warns the priests too not to trust in those deceiving voices which declare that the sacred vessels of the temple should soon be brought from Babylon. If they are true prophets, and have the ear of the Lord, they had better spend their time in interceding that the few vessels still left in the temple be not also carried away.

Jeremiah lived to see the discomfiture of the time-serving prophets, and of those who had put their trust in them. In the closing days of the national life, when the capital city was invested by hostile armies, and when the blindest could see that the blow must fall soon, this prophet significantly asked the king: "Where now are your prophets which prophesied unto you, saying, The king of Babylon shall not come against you, nor against the land?"[2]

[1] Jer. xxvii. [2] Jer. xxxvii. 19.

We must turn now to see what Jeremiah has to say about the other great phase of the popular religion, the sacrificial system. The Lord declares that the people have rejected His law: "Why then comes there to Me frankincense from Sheba, and the sweet cane from a far country? Your burnt offerings are not acceptable, nor your sacrifices pleasing unto Me."[1] Again the prophet says, "Add your burnt offerings unto your sacrifices, and eat ye flesh" —Jahveh's part and your own you may eat, for it is nothing but flesh. "I did not speak to your fathers, nor commanded them in the day that I brought them out of the land of Egypt, concerning burnt offerings or sacrifice."[2] The sacrificial system was neither ancient nor authoritative, and whatever value it may have had was lost by reason of the wickedness of the people: "When they fast, I will not hear their cry; and when they offer burnt offering and oblation, I will not accept them."[3] These passages are quite enough to show that Jeremiah did not believe that the priestly law was of Mosaic origin, or that a holy and just God could be reconciled by sacrifice, which meant no more than so much flesh and blood.

But an institution might be good without owning Moses as its author. That Jeremiah was not an image-breaker may be inferred from his remarks about the Sabbath. He commands the people in the name of his God to bear no burden on the Sabbath day, nor to do any work, but to hallow the

[1] Jer. vi. 20. [2] Jer. vii. 21 f.
[3] Jer. xiv. 12.

day as God had commanded.[1] In other words, he insisted upon the observance of the Decalogue. This commandment seemed to Jeremiah fraught with moral power, and therefore he endorsed it heartily. Sacrifices were offered as a substitute for virtue, and were therefore intolerable.

There was a popular superstition which gave the people much comfort, affording another bubble for this prophet to prick. The temple had become a very sacred place, and even in the highest thought it seemed that Jahveh was bound to it in some mysterious way, so that misfortune to the temple meant misfortune to God. This was an old superstition in a new form. In the early days of Samuel, when the people were hard pressed by the Philistines, they thought that by taking the sacred ark into the battle they could compel the presence of Jahveh, and consequently His favourable intervention. Their eyes should have been opened by the capture of the ark. Jeremiah found those who cried "the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord are these," and believed that in that fact they found assurance of safety. No, it will not be. It is vain for thieves and murderers

[1] Jer. xvii. 19 ff. Duhm and others, as we might readily suppose, look upon this passage as spurious, on the ground that it belongs to the interests of the trito-Isaiah, Nehemiah, and their followers. Why so? This law was published in Jeremiah's day, and opposed as he was to the priestly system, he may have adhered to the Decalogue, just as the Puritans struggled fiercely against sacerdotalism, but were strict sabbatarians. Jeremiah would probably take positions in the enthusiasm of the days of reform which he would not follow up in later days, when he was occupied with graver matters than the Sabbath. The Church needs to learn that to-day there are weightier matters than the observance of Sunday.

to come into the house which is called by God's name, and say, "We are delivered." So far from the sanctity of the temple saving the polluted people, God would destroy this temple, even as He had destroyed Shiloh long before.

More than any other prophet Jeremiah came into conflict with the powers that be; for men are ever intolerant when riding to their doom. In his time there was, it is true, a ray of hope in the reformation of Josiah, but the good effect of this effort was destroyed by the king's untimely death. After his day Judah's course to destruction was swift, both morally and politically. It was a time when even the leaders of the people were unwilling to hear rebukes, when they wanted no man to show them a more excellent way, and yet God would not let them perish without sending "Moses and the prophets." But the man who spoke brave words at such a time and to such a people was sure to have a sad experience, and to know the full measure of human suffering.

Jeremiah's remarks about the temple first kindled the flame. The priests, prophets, and people laid hold of him, saying, "Thou shalt surely die." Jeremiah had spoken blasphemy in his speech about the temple, and he was brought to trial on the same charge which cost our dear Lord His life. It was a capital offence, and the leaders of the Church were hungry for blood. But the prophet's time had not yet come, and he was acquitted by the powerful intervention of Ahikam the son of Shaphan.[1]

[1] Jer. xxvi. See further on this passage in chap. x.

There was another plot of which we know but little, and yet that little shows the source of the persecution, and that at one period at least both prophet and priest felt that their power was slipping away on account of Jeremiah's teaching. Here is the passage: "And they said, Come, let us devise devices against Jeremiah; for the law shall not perish from the priest, nor counsel from the wise, nor the word from the prophet. Come, let us smite him with the tongue, and let us not give heed to any of his words."[1] Whatever the nature of this conspiracy, it was certainly successful in drawing from Jeremiah some fierce imprecations.[2] We do not need to endorse his savage curses, nor have we a right to forget that he lived six centuries before Christ, and we in the twentieth century after Christ.

One of the hardest of Jeremiah's trials came from the hands of Pashhur the priest, and chief officer of the temple. He was so incensed at the message of woe that he seized Jeremiah and kept him all night in the stocks. Did he break his spirit and silence him by this punishment? Let us see the situation: Pashhur has released his prisoner in the morning, and he stands before him stiff and sore in body, but fierce and strong in spirit; and these are his words: "Not Pashhur has Jahveh called thy name, but Magor-missabib (terror on every side): for thus saith Jahveh, Lo, I will make thee a terror to thyself, and to all thy friends. By the sword of their foes they shall fall in the sight of thine eyes. And thou, Pashhur, and all that dwell in thy house, shall go to

[1] Jer. xviii. 18. [2] Jer. xviii. 21 ff.

Babylon as captives and die there and be buried there, thou and all thy friends to whom thou hast prophesied falsely."[1] The prophet and the Church could not stand very close together in the face of such conditions. We need scarcely be surprised, however, that a reaction came when poor Jeremiah was alone, and that he cried out that God had deceived him: for he felt that there was no use standing alone any more, as Church and State persistently sought his life; so he resolved to give up his sacred office, and was only held to his duty by the Divine fire in his bones which was bound to burn its way out. Jeremiah had to learn by bitter experience the truth of Emerson's words, "The seer must be a sayer."

In the fourth year of Zedekiah, but a few years before the fall of Jerusalem, Hananiah openly challenged Jeremiah, when they were both standing before a company of priests and people, by crying: "Thus saith Jahveh, I have broken the yoke of the king of Babylon. Within two years will I bring back to this place all the vessels of the house of Jahveh which Nebuchadrezzar the king of Babylon has taken from this place and carried to Babylon. And Jeconiah the son of Jehoiakim the king of Judah and all the captives of Judah who were carried to Babylon I will bring back to this place, saith Jahveh; for I will break the yoke of the king of Babylon."[2]

Let us pause a moment to see the situation which Jeremiah had to face. It is easy to say that Hananiah

[1] Jer. xx. 3 ff. condensed. [2] Jer. xxviii. 2 ff.

was a false prophet,[1] to whom the people had no right to listen. It is easy to say the same thing of all the other prophets who stood against Jeremiah and his like. It is easy to see now that they were false prophets, because they did not speak God's truth to the people. But a careful investigation shows that they were not properly called false prophets, and did not stand before the people as wolves in sheep's clothing. They were the members of the established order,[2] and so far had, perhaps, a better claim upon the people's confidence than Jeremiah himself. Notice that the chapter relating this encounter is written in the first person, and is therefore autobiographical ;[3] yet Jeremiah himself accords to his mistaken opponent the title of prophet.[4]

Jeremiah's answer is not very strong. He appears to have been face to face with a situation too puzzling for him to grapple with for the moment, perhaps by reason of his surprise. "Amen," said Jeremiah to

[1] The Septuagint text calls Hananiah a false prophet; rendering נביא in Jer. xxviii. 1 by ψευδοπροφήτης. This represents the judgment of a time long after Jeremiah. See also p. 106 ff.

[2] See further in chap. iv.

[3] Duhm follows Cornill in emending the text of Jer. xxviii. 1 by striking out אלי, and rendering "and Hananiah said unto the priests and to all the people in the house of Jahveh." The point he makes is that Jeremiah is everywhere spoken of in the third person. But this much emending would require more, for לעיני means "in the presence of," and this would have to be struck out in ver. 1, and twice in ver. 5. Moreover, the very point of the whole discussion is that Hananiah was directly contradicting Jeremiah's plea to wear the yoke of Babylon (Jer. xxvii.). The change of text is unnecessary, has no support in the versions, and impairs the force of the prophecy.

[4] "Hananiah the son of Azzur, the prophet" (Jer. xxviii. 1).

his antagonist, "may Jahveh do so; may Jahveh confirm your words. You speak good news, and I speak bad news. Look back and answer from history which is likely to be the true forecast of this people's fate." Hananiah broke the yoke which Jeremiah was wearing on his neck as a symbol of submission; but a symbol and the thing symbolised are not always the same. Nothing was easier than to wrest the yoke from the prophet's neck; nothing was more impossible than the wresting of Judah from the hand of Babylon. Jeremiah declared that a yoke of iron would take the place of the yoke of wood, and that Hananiah, who made the people believe a lie, would atone for his sins by his death; "and Hananiah the prophet died in that year in the seventh month,"[1] two months after his bold prediction of peace.

We cannot follow Jeremiah through the even bitterer sufferings yet in store for him. The priests and prophets had tried in vain to accomplish his destruction. When they gave it up, the State took a hand, and then truly Jeremiah experienced living martyrdom. But he survived to see his persecutors prisoners in Babylonia, and the Church, which had resisted the only power to save it, in hopeless decay. The Church departed further and further from the teaching of the great prophets, and so became the deadly formal thing which Jesus found when He came to earth.

Zephaniah, a contemporary of Jeremiah, saw disaster threatening his land and people, and naturally

[1] Jer. xxviii. 17.

looked about to see what forces were at work which might avert the calamity. Alas for the day! for both State and Church were on the side of evil. "Her princes in the midst of her are roaring lions; her judges are evening wolves; they leave nothing till the morrow. Her prophets are light and treacherous persons; her priests have profaned the sanctuary, they have done violence to the law."[1] There could be no harmonious co-operation between a prophet, zealous for truth and righteousness, and a Church so corrupt that even the leaders are not to be trusted.

Ezekiel was at heart much under the influence of his priesthood; we might call him a zealous high Churchman; but he never forgot, as an American bishop has put it, to take a broad view from a high standpoint. He was zealous for the law, for the temple, and for all the Divine institutions of religion. But he was not blind to the fact that the Church as it was could hardly claim the favour of a holy God, who always regarded the inward and spiritual above the outward and visible.

This priest-prophet was enabled to learn a great truth from that most effective of teachers, experience. The attitude of many Jews in exile is expressed in the pathetic inquiry: "How shall we sing Jahveh's song in a foreign land?"[2] Without temple or altar—and the law forbade an altar except at Jerusalem—many exiles felt like David did,[3] that they were

[1] Zeph. iii. 3 f. [2] Psalm cxxxvii. 4.

[3] When David was hiding in the hill of Hachilah, he complained that "they had driven him out that he could not join himself with the inheritance of Judah, saying, Go, serve other gods" (1 Sam. xxvi. 19).

separated from God. Probably Ezekiel felt so at first, but the visions taught him that God's voice was effective in Babylon as well as in Judah. O, that men would learn (adapting Emerson slightly) that God not merely was, but is; that He not merely spoke, but speaks. Ezekiel is led to see that God Himself would be a sanctuary for a little while to all that sought Him in the countries where they are come;[1] as someone has put it, "God without the temple is better than the temple without God."

God would be a living temple to those in exile, but the temple in Jerusalem was barren of the Divine presence, and so its consecration became null and void. Thus Ezekiel explains a problem which had puzzled many. The temple was so sacred to Jahveh that His failure to defend it to the utmost was inconceivable. To abandon the place called by His name would be an inconceivable confession of weakness. Hence the confidence of the people who cried, "The temple of Jahveh is here," and regarded it as a sure talisman of safety. Yes, said Ezekiel, your major premises are all right. Jahveh is omnipotent. Before Him all the armies of the world are but pigmies. As long as the temple was the place where Jahveh had caused His name to dwell, it was inviolable. But Jahveh has withdrawn from the sanctuary of Zion: "Then did the cherubim spread

Being outside of Jahveh's bounds, he could not worship his God. So Naaman the Syrian felt that in order to worship Jahveh in Damascus he must carry away a bit of the soil of Jahveh's land (2 Kings v. 17). To this day there is a fondness for baptism with water carried from the river Jordan.

[1] Ezek. xi. 16.

their wings, and the wheels were beside them; and the glory of the God of Israel was over them above. And the glory of Jahveh rose from the midst of the city, and stood on the mountain which is eastward of the city."[1] Jahveh abandons the wicked city to its fate, for the temple has become unclean, and so is no longer a fit habitation for Him; and without Jahveh the temple is of no avail.

Yet Ezekiel's feeling for the temple was so strong that he could not but hold the impious hand lifted against it as guilty. At the head of Ammon's sins stands their blasphemous cry, "Aha," when the sanctuary was profaned.[2] So a later poet-prophet prayed against Edom:—

> "Remember, Jahveh, against the sons of Edom,
> The day of Jerusalem,
> Who were crying, Rase it, rase it [the temple]
> Even to the foundation thereof."[3]

God was driven away from His sanctuary, not by Babylonian arms, but by the gross impurity of His own chosen people. We have already seen[4] how the leading men were engaged in idolatrous worship in various forms in the sacred precincts. Ezekiel does not mention any priests[5] as participants, but as they had acquiesced, whereas they should have resisted even at the cost of their lives, they were adjudged guilty. The evil condition may become such that even the benign Son of Man must

[1] Ezek. xi. 22 f.
[2] Ezek. xxv. 3.
[3] Psalm cxxxvii. 7.
[4] See chap. x.
[5] The "elders" mentioned (Ezek. viii. 11) were civil officers.

needs take a scourge to drive out those who were defiling God's courts.

The work of destruction was committed to the six mysterious beings, each with his slaughter weapon in his hand,[1] and from whose blows those only were exempt upon whose forehead the scribe had placed a mark. When they commenced operations this significant command was given, "Begin at My sanctuary,"[2] for there the most culpable would be found. They were ordered to defile the house by filling the courts with the slain.

Ezekiel knew that many of the woes of Jerusalem were due to the misguiding voices of those who gave messages in the name of Jahveh. He has a prophecy against these deluding voices.[3] They "speak out of their own heart," that is, follow their own inclination. They have been to Israel like foxes in the waste places. They have made men hope for that which would never come to pass. Women as well as men were involved in this guilt. For handfuls of barley and for pieces of bread (fees) they had profaned God among the people, trying to save the worthless and to destroy the good.[4]

The priests were equally at fault. They have done violence to the law, and have profaned the holy things, confusing the holy and the common, and annulling the Sabbath law.[5] Jerusalem would fall, not because of her ecclesiastical institutions, but because the wickedness of men would make them of no effect.

[1] Ezek. ix. 2. [2] Ezek. ix. 6. [3] Ezek. xiii.
[4] Ezek. xiii. 17 ff. [5] Ezek. xxii. 26.

Ezekiel looked upon the Church as playing a great rôle in the restoration which would come in the future. In the new Jerusalem no prophet appears, but the temple area occupies a large part of Jewish territory, that is, the whole land would be sacred; and the priest holds a position superior even to that of the prince.

There was a prophet whose name we do not know, but whose works place him at the very forefront of all the men of God in Hebrew history—the author of Isaiah liii. Whether he lived in the exile, or in the dark days in Jerusalem which followed the restoration, it is not easy to say. Whether he is depicting the fortunes of an individual or of the nation of Israel is a moot question. I can only venture my opinion that the experience so feelingly described is that of a martyr for righteousness' sake, and that the scene of his sufferings was on foreign soil.

The sufferer had been a prophet in the true sense; he had been a stout upholder of the religion of Jahveh; and his steadfastness in that religion had brought him into the toils. He was entirely unsupported by the men of his own race; indeed, they looked upon his tribulations as not only inflictions from God, but as just punishments for his wrong.

Some of the people came to see their error. They not only could admire the great fortitude of one who went to the slaughter like a lamb, but they came to see that the suffering endured was vicarious, the innocent suffering for the guilty. It is not surprising that after the Passion of our Lord, this passage took an exalted place in Messianic prophecy.

But the number of those who saw their error must have been small. There could have been no general opening of the eyes of the Jewish Church even to a single concrete fact like this. For if the Jews had followed their prophets, in this and other cases, their political history might have been much the same: they might still have been in bondage to Egypt, Philistia, Assyria, Babylon, and Rome; but they would not have crucified their Messiah. Only the children of those who slew the prophets could have led Jesus Christ to Calvary. The noble prophecy is in truth a forecast as well as a history; for without a great change in sentiment, the race which could gloat over this innocent victim would not scruple to take the life of one greater than their father Abraham.

But the prophets had to learn not to fear man, who could destroy only the body, but God, who could destroy both body and soul. They were bound to discover in due season that the world, or even the Church, which should embody the highest stage of religious enlightenment, does not welcome a voice out of harmony with its institutions. Another prophet of the same period describes his own fate, and shows thereby how his message was received by his fellows:—

"The Lord Jahveh has given me the tongue of disciples to know how to sustain the weary with a word. He quickens by morning, by morning He quickens in me the ear to hear as disciples. The Lord Jahveh opened my ear, and I was not obstinate, nor did I turn back [from the dangerous message]. I bent my back to those who smite, and my cheeks I

turned to those who pluck the beard; I turned not my face from abuse and spitting. The Lord Jahveh strengthens me; therefore I am not confounded, therefore I set my face like flint, and know that I shall not be confused."[1]

One might imagine that such a story comes from an age when there was a regularly established inquisition to suppress those who adhered to the true message from God. The worst persecutions of the Christians were not those inflicted by Jews or Romans, but those devised by their brethren of the same faith. No foreign punishment compared in severity to the Spanish Inquisition. So the worst afflictions of the Hebrew prophet came ever from the Jewish Church.

In the post-exilic period the prophets stand in close and friendly relation to the Church. The first of them, Haggai, as we have already seen,[2] was chiefly concerned with the rebuilding of the temple. We find in him a sad decline from the great spiritual leaders who had preceded him; for he seems to look upon the temple as the talisman by whose instrumentality peace and prosperity would come to the new Israel. He explains the dearth and hardship which characterised the early days of the restoration as due to the neglect of the temple.[3] The people had sought each one his own welfare, but when asked to join in the rebuilding of the house of the Lord, had replied, "The time is not come."[4] God punished the people for their indifference by causing

[1] Isa. l. 4 ff.
[2] See chap. x.
[3] Hag. i. 5–11.
[4] Hag. i. 2.

the heavens to withhold the dew and the earth its fruit.[1]

Haggai had to appeal not only to the people, but to the governor, and to the high-priest, Joshua. Even the latter seems to have shown no zeal for the restoration of the ritual until aroused by the prophet.[2] After the foundation was laid, Haggai again reviews the history of the times, explaining the dearth as a Divine punishment; but now that the work of reconstructing the temple is under way, he promises that from that day forward God will bless the land with plenty.[3]

Zechariah seems to have taken a prominent part in the investiture of the high-priest Joshua. At least Ewald's explanation of that somewhat mysterious passage in chapter iii. seems to me still the most probable. The priest had been constrained to exercise his functions in garments that were unsuitable to the high office. The opposition was so vigorous that the prophet presents the picture of Satan standing against the priest. The people were seemingly as unwilling to contribute for ecclesiastical vestments as for temple building. But the prophet triumphs and sees the priest clothed in the rich apparel which belonged to his office, and with a clean mitre upon his head.

Zechariah succeeded in persuading certain men who had returned from exile, and who were apparently possessed of considerable means, to provide gold and silver to make crowns for the high-priest. In crowning Joshua, Zechariah even goes so far as to declare that the priest finds in himself the fulfilment

[1] Hag. i. 10. [2] Hag. i. 14. [3] Hag. ii. 10–19.

of his Messianic prophecy;[1] for he is the very Branch who shall build the temple, and bear the glory, and rule upon the throne. Ezekiel's prophecy is fulfilled, and we have fairly established in this era a form of government in which the civil power is subordinate to the ecclesiastical. Alas! that no Church, Jewish or Christian, has ever been able to bear that supremacy. We may content ourselves with the belief that the failure was due to its not being of God, and that the law "he that exalted himself shall be humbled" applies to Churches as well as to individuals.

Priests and people alike recognise the prophet as the oracle of God. A grave question arises as to the observance of the fasts[2] which had been kept during the exile, as a mark of the humiliation of that period and as a plea to Jahveh to bring back the captivity of His people. Should those fasts be still kept up, now that their appropriateness is no longer apparent? The law threw no light on such a question, and therefore the priests could give no answer. They were bound now to the written law, in which they were the recognised authorities.[3] The prophet, however, could deal with this new problem; for by him a new revelation could come. And Zechariah rises to one of his highest levels in his answer: the fasts kept in the exile were but selfish

[1] Zech. vi. 9 ff.; cf. iii. 8.

[2] There were four of these fasts: that of the fourth month, marking the capture of Jerusalem (Jer. xxxix. 2); of the fifth, marking its destruction (2 Kings xxv. 8); of the seventh, marking the murder of Gedaliah (Jer. xli.); and of the tenth, marking the beginning of the siege of Jerusalem (2 Kings xxv. 1).

[3] Hag. ii. 11 ff.

rites rather than an honour to Jahveh ;[1] Jahveh still prefers mercy to sacrifice; justice, kindness, compassion are the traits demanded by Him ;[2] therefore the fast days shall become the days of joy and gladness and cheerful feasts; indicative of the love of truth and peace.[3]

"Malachi"[4] is concerned about the kind of sacrificial offerings made by the priests. Between the tribute from their flocks for the governor and for the priests, the people doubtless felt themselves to be in an evil case. There was no shading of the quality of the governor's quota; but as Jahveh's part went to the priests, it was customary to offer inferior animals. Against this the prophet lifts his voice in vigorous protest: "O priests, that despise My name. You offer polluted bread upon My altar. You say, The table of Jahveh is contemptible. And when you offer the blind for sacrifice, it is no evil! and when you offer the lame and the sick, it is no evil!"[5] "You say also, Behold, what a weariness it is! and you have sniffed at it. . . . Cursed be the deceiver, who hath in his flock a male, and makes a vow and sacrifices unto the Lord a blemished thing."[6] The priesthood has become so corrupt that the prophet must need hold up to the priests the proper observance of the ritual laws.

Malachi has much to say besides against the priests.[7] He holds up the true ideal of the priesthood: "The priest's lips should guard knowledge, and they should seek the law from his mouth; for

[1] Zech. vii. 5 ff. [2] Zech. vii. 9. [3] Zech. viii. 19.
[4] Additional note (13). [5] Mal. i. 6 ff. [6] Mal. i. 13 ff. [7] Mal. ii.

he is the messenger of Jahveh of hosts."[1] The actual condition was very different: "You are turned aside from the way; you have caused many to stumble in the law; you have corrupted the covenant of Levi."[2]

Malachi's idea of righteousness is the observance of the ordinances.[3] He does, indeed, say some wholesome things against divorce.[4] But one of his great charges against the people is that they have robbed God by failing to pay their quota of tithes and offerings.[5] Let the people bring the whole tithe into the sacred storehouse, that there may be food in the temple, and then God will make Judah a bountiful land.[6]

Still more has prophecy lost its true note in Joel, who was probably the latest of the canonical prophets. Joel was more priest than prophet, so that when famine swept over the land as a result of drought and vast swarms of locusts, the remedy proposed is to seek the favour of God by a great fast, at which the priests standing between the porch and the altar were to say this litany: "Spare Thy people, Jahveh, and give not Thy heritage to reproach, that the nations should rule over them: wherefore should they say among the peoples, Where is their God?"[7] The blessings which God showered upon the land, by driving away the great army of locusts and by pouring the rain from heaven, are traced to this supplication of the priests.

[1] Mal. ii. 7. [2] Mal. ii. 8. [3] Mal. iii. 7.
[4] Mal. ii. 14 ff. [5] Mal. iii. 8. [6] Mal. iii. 10.
[7] Joel ii. 17; cf. Psalm xlii. 3, 10.

But Joel rises to a great height once, when he points out the coming day on which God's Spirit will be poured upon all flesh.[1] The knowledge of God's will shall not be limited to priest and prophet, for the sons and daughters shall prophesy, the old men shall dream dreams, the young men shall see visions, and even upon the servants and handmaids will God's Spirit be poured.

We see that the voice of prophecy was becoming faint as the sun sets on the long day of Israel's great religious fervour. The approach of the long night of legalism was at hand. There were no great prophets to avert the doom, and the Jewish Church sank into that deadly state from which Jesus sought in vain to arouse it.

The prophets never turned their back upon the Church; the Church turned its back upon them. They never separated from the Church, nor would they be driven out. They worked for the purification of the Church, but always from the inside. In this they were followed by our Lord. He went to Jerusalem to keep the feast, and went out of the city only to go to Calvary. The Church finds much opposition from outside, but criticism is always more effective from inside. But those on the inside are so apt to become dead and blind like those lying prophets. The Church should be especially grateful for every voice for betterment which comes from within her bosom.

If the time shall ever come—it has never yet been—when there shall be but one fold and one

[1] Joel ii. 28 ff.

Shepherd, there will not then necessarily be a perfect Church; but one great element in her power will be that all the forces which make for Christian progress and moral purity will come from within.

In the contest between the prophets and the established religious order of their times, our sympathies are of course on the side of the prophets. They were right and the Church was wrong. But the lessons of all history warn us nevertheless to be charitable in our judgment. In this enlightened age the Church still occasionally lays violent hands upon a prophet. The Church has no desire to crush truth; she aims to conserve it. The trouble is always due to the inability to see what the truth actually is.

Despite opposition and persecution, the Church was influenced by the prophets. The Church always in a way heeds the voices of those she martyrs. Jastrow thus gives a general estimate of that influence: "The prophetical movement gave an ethical flavour to the conception of the national deity . . . resulted in the creation of an elaborate legal code, in which all the rites of the religion and the functions of the priesthood are brought into accord with the principles of ethical monotheism as preached by the prophets."[1] Though the Jewish Church fell far away from the prophetic ideal, it was at all events the better for the preaching of the prophets. In the long run the prophet is bound to find his audience and exert his influence. However hard people may try to stop their ears, the voice of truth slowly penetrates all obstructions.

[1] *The Study of Religion*, p. 79.

CHAPTER XIII

THE PROPHET'S VISION

IN this closing chapter I propose to gather up some points of interest which have not found a place in the preceding discussion. To do this I use the term "vision" in no technical and limited sense, but to indicate rather the prophet's broad outlook upon the world, and also his conception of God. His vision really included both things. The prophet became a spokesman because he was first a man with a vision. The gloss in 1 Samuel ix. 9[1] is correct in one sense: it gives the true order of development. *Nabi* probably means speaker;[2] *roeh* certainly means "one who sees." In the course of the development of prophecy there must have been men who saw before there were men who said. So with the individual: a man must be a seer before he can be a prophet. Isaiah must have his vision in the temple before he can face Ahaz at the conduit of the upper pool.[3]

The true prophet felt that his power to see was the

[1] "He that is now called the prophet was beforetime called the seer"; see further above, p. 30.

[2] Opinion is divided whether *nabi* means a spokesman, as, *e.g.*, Winckler maintains, or one who bubbles (under the influence of the Spirit), as, *e.g.*, Kraetzschmar maintains. See additional note (14).

[3] Isa. vii. 3.

gift of God. His eyes saw, because Jahveh had opened them. His ears heard, because the Lord had quickened them. Hence it was that he stood by his vision even when it brought him persecution from Church or State. Hence also his isolation; for the prophets were, as a rule, men distrusted by their contemporaries. Rarely in all history has a great prophet had a general following in his lifetime. Jeremiah, Socrates, and Jesus Christ alike had the experience which belongs to the order of prophets. Man seems to dislike and distrust a vision keener than his own.

The prophet was not only vouchsafed occasional glimpses into the mysteries of heaven, but he felt that he was accorded a full knowledge of the Divine purposes; in fact, his whole life seemed to be possessed of the Spirit of God, and directed whithersoever God would. The old writer shows the prophetic idea when he represents Jahveh as constrained to reveal to Abraham His purpose to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah.[1] So Amos states the broad principle: "Verily the Lord Jahveh will take no action except He disclose His purpose to His servants the prophets."[2]

The old seer Micaiah knew that the prophets who were predicting a successful campaign for Ahab were altogether wrong. He could not explain their error as we can,[3] but was constrained to give an interpreta-

[1] Gen. xviii. 17 ff. The passage is assigned to J. (the Jahvist), the oldest of the Pentateuchal sources, and the one most endowed with the prophetic spirit.

[2] Amos iii. 7.

[3] This incident is fully treated on p. 52 ff.

tion of their fault in accordance with his idea that the prophets were entirely dominated by Jahveh. Therefore he describes his vision of the lying spirit which had come down to pervert the vision of Ahab's prophets,[1] and so lead the king to disaster.

Shortly before the invasion of Sennacherib, Isaiah is led to speak with astonishment of the blindness of the people, because they could not see what was pressing so near. Apparently there were no prophetic voices lifted up to warn the people, a fact which required explanation. The prophet interpreted the silence of the seers in a way that shows his idea of the Divine dominance of the prophets: "For Jahveh has poured upon you a spirit of heavy slumber; He has tightly shut your eyes the prophets; and He has covered your heads the seers."[2] The prophets do not see and the seers do not hear; the closing of the eyes and the covering of the head, by which this condition is brought about, are only explicable as coming from God. The prophet can only speak as he is moved of God, and can only keep silent as he is restrained of God. Here, indeed, is a new and fruitful idea, the inspiration of silence. Such inspiration surely is as necessary as any other. It is sometimes easier to act than to be quiet, easier to speak than to hold one's peace. Our Blessed Lord was no whit less conspicuously the Son of God when He "answered not a word," than when He cried, "Woe unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!"

A good illustration of the completeness of God's

[1] Ezekiel held essentially the same idea; see Ezek. xiv. 9.
[2] Isa. xxix. 10.

control over the prophets is shown in Ezekiel's dumbness. The prophet was told at the very beginning of his ministry that God would make his tongue cleave to his mouth, so that he would be dumb, and unable to engage in the useless task of reproving the rebellious house of Israel.[1] This dumbness was appointed to last until the fall of Jerusalem,[2] that is, for some five years. Whether the prophet was unable to speak during all that time may be doubtful; certainly we have prophecies from the period. But it surely means that Ezekiel was not to prophesy actively during that hopeless time, when it was clear that neither the purpose of the people to sin nor the purpose of God to punish could be changed. And it means that God's control over His prophet is absolute.

On the other hand, the hard facts so plainly told in the Bible have constrained men to abandon the unfortunate doctrine of mechanical inspiration. The notion of Athenagoras, "the Spirit making use of them as a flute player breathes into a flute,"[3] offers a theory of prophecy inconsistent with the facts, and unsatisfying to man's aspirations. Man rejoices to be a servant of the Most High, but desires to consecrate to that service all the faculties with which God has endowed him. The facts which I shall proceed to point out are not inconsistent, however, with the statement in the Nicene Creed, "Who spake by the prophets." Complete as God's control of the seer was, he was never a mere machine operated by

[1] Ezek. iii. 25 f. [2] Ezek. xxiv. 27.
[3] *A Plea for the Christians*, chap. ix.

Divine power. He was never constrained to lay aside his natural intelligence.

The prophet did not always have immediately at command a message which was surely the word of God. Often he must labour and struggle to catch the suggestion from on high. Jeremiah on one occasion waited ten days for the required answer; and they must have been days of mental and spiritual travail. When the captains came to the prophet, after the fall of Jerusalem and the murder of Gedaliah, to know whether they should go to Egypt, or take their chances against Nebuchadrezzar's wrath by abiding in the land of Judah, Jeremiah sent them away, and it was only after ten days' waiting that he was satisfied to give them advice which he was sure represented the mind of God.[1]

The prophet might give his oracle and then be led to change it. Nathan at first counselled David to carry out his purpose to build a temple for Jahveh; but after sleeping over the matter, he said positively that David should not build the house, but that the task should be reserved for the more peaceful times of David's son.[2] It cannot be supposed that God changed His mind during the night. If Nathan's final advice was right, then at first he spoke without knowledge of the Divine will.[3] Similarly Isaiah

[1] Jer. xlii. 7. [2] 2 Sam. vii. 1 ff.

[3] No essential change is required in the interpretation above if one holds with Budde that ver. 13 is a Deuteronomic interpolation, and that the original passage knows nothing of the Solomonic temple (*Bücher Samuel, in loc.*). Nathan did first counsel David to build the house, and then not to do so, even if he did not predict Solomon's building.

went to Hezekiah, lying apparently on his death-bed, and advised him to set his house in order for he would surely die; further, he prefaced his message with the formula, "Thus saith Jahveh."[1] But before the harbinger of evil had reached the middle of the palace court[2] he was commanded to go back and bid the king good cheer, for he would yet live fifteen years.[3] It is true that it might be said that it was first God's intention that the king should die, and then that the intention was changed by reason of Hezekiah's prayer. To say nothing of the doubtfulness of such an interpretation, it would remain the fact that Isaiah was not possessed of the knowledge which belonged to God. For God must have known the whole story, whatever the outcome was to be.

Elisha was puzzled to find that a calamity had befallen the Shunamite whose hospitality he had enjoyed, and "Jahveh had hid it from him, and had not informed him."[4] He felt that there was something strange that the child miraculously born to the woman should have died without his knowledge. It seemed wrong that the woman should come to him in distress without his knowing the cause of her

[1] 2 Kings xx. i. = Isa. xxxviii. 1.

[2] The English versions follow written text and read "city" instead of "court"; the *qeri*, or emended text, which I have followed, seems to be right here (see Kittel, *Königsbücher*, *in loc.*). Isaiah had not got away from the palace before the new message was given to him.

[3] 2 Kings xx. 4 ff. The parallel in Isaiah xxxviii. omits the note of time. The story seemingly was already a puzzle to the Chronicler; for he mentions the sickness and recovery of the king, but is silent about the contradictory messages of the prophet.

[4] 2 Kings iv. 27.

sorrow. The vision of the prophet was not broad enough to comprehend all the events which happened even in the narrow range of his own life.

Again the prophet shows his limitations in his attempt to restore the child. God must be the source of the rekindled life, and God is not dependent upon any particular means. It would suffice, then, to accomplish the resurrection by a simple process; and so Gehazi is sent with Elisha's staff and directed to lay it upon the face of the child. The servant did as he was bid; but there was neither voice nor hearing, and the discomfited agent had to go back and report, "The child is not awaked."

The mother, with the truer womanly instinct, had little faith in the staff. She refused to leave the seer's abode unless he accompanied her, and in response to her importunity Elisha started to Shunem to learn from Gehazi on the way how needful indeed was his presence there. When he went to the chamber, not with a talisman, but with personal ministration, then "the flesh of the child waxed warm," and with renewed efforts, the eyes were opened, and the living child was restored to his mother.

The word of a prophet, though uncontradicted by him, was not necessarily final for all time. The vision might stand for the moment, and yet not reach the high plane of eternal truth. Jehu was not only anointed by a prophet, acting under advice from Elisha, but he was commanded to slay every male child of the house of Ahab.[1] Jahveh commended Jehu, doubtless by the mouth of a prophet, for his

[1] 2 Kings ix. 8.

zeal in making a holocaust of the Baal worshippers, and for shedding the blood of the royal house.[1] But Hosea's vision came nearer to the truth of God than Elisha's, and one of his sharpest censures is directed against the bloodshed of the house of Jehu.[2] God inspired Elisha, and the same God inspired Hosea—at least, so I think—but they were not mere flutes, helpless except as touched by the hand that plays them. Hosea lived in a later day, and was possessed of finer instincts than the plowman, and so his vision comprehended a truth to which his less enlightened brother was blind.

The perplexity of St. Peter at the vision which he saw upon the housetop at Joppa[3] is illuminative of the way in which God deals with all His prophets. A suggestion is given which must be interpreted and applied. An idea is breathed into the mind of the seer, but the idea is a seed which must be converted into fruit, and the husbandman will by no means be relieved of his share in that labour. Habakkuk was sorely puzzled by the facts which he saw—the great heathen power of Babylon inflicting ruin on a nation which, with all its shortcomings, was holier than its assailants. His own efforts must help him to resolve his doubts.

We ought not to think it strange that there was a limitation set to the prophet's vision; that he was not able to forecast the future with detailed accuracy,[4]

[1] 2 Kings x. 30. [2] Hosea i. 4. [3] Acts x.

[4] The non-fulfilment of many prophetic predictions is a certain fact in the phenomena of prophecy; but the subject is too large to be adequately treated here. See, however, p. 121 ff.

nor even to grasp always the range of events of his own time. For Jesus taught a doctrine which sweeps aside all the ideas which have so tenaciously clung about the overloaded doctrine of inspiration. Jesus declared that the humble fisher-folk of the Sea of Galilee had a broader vision of heavenly things than the greatest prophet of Hebrew history. "Many prophets and righteous men desired to see the things which ye see, and saw them not; and to hear the things which ye hear, and heard them not."[1] The prophets of Israel were greater men than the disciples of Jesus; but the vision of Jesus was infinitely truer than that of the seers, and the humble disciples were given some of the results of their Master's insight.

The errant vision of the seers unhappily extended at times even to the moral sphere. Moses is reputed to be the author of the Decalogue; but he who engraved upon the stone the words, "Thou shalt not steal," counselled his people to plunder the Egyptians on the eve of their departure from the land of bondage. The sacred writer says that this counsel was given by Moses at the express command of God,[2] and that Jahveh gave them favour in the eyes of the Egyptians so as to further their evil project.[3]

Samuel was too much afraid of Saul openly to anoint David as his rival claimant to the throne. He had recourse to a subterfuge. He pretended that he had come to Bethlehem merely to offer a sacrifice. Under cover of that sacrifice he secretly anointed the

[1] Matt. xiii. 17.
[2] Exod. xi. 1 f.
[3] Exod. xii. 36.

youthful shepherd as the king of all Israel.[1] One may well say that that is no great evil, and indeed it would not be a very great sin for even such a man as Samuel to dissemble in order to save his life. But we are told that Samuel's deception was due to the command of God, and that brings the matter sharply home as serious. What we might easily understand and extenuate in Samuel, we can neither understand nor extenuate in God. It is one of the gifts of modern study that we can grasp the true situation. The errant vision of the seer explains the whole problem. That Samuel mistook his guidance, that he attributed to God a plan devised in his own mind, shows not only the solution of a moral difficulty in the Bible, but also reveals the nature of the prophet's vision. It is not always easy to be sure whether one is seeing with one's own eyes or another's. The prophets were not relieved of the perplexities and dangers of life by virtue of their relation to God.

It is a strange thing that the gravest of such errant visions is chargeable to Jeremiah. The poor persecuted prophet had long been a prisoner; Ebed-melech, the Ethiopian eunuch, had just rescued him from the miry pit. He was brought to the king for consultation, and was given a glimpse of the king's intentions, which Zedekiah did not care to have known by his court. He therefore charged the prophet not to disclose the interview, but, if questioned, to pretend that he had only petitioned the king not to send him back to the dungeon, where he had nearly died. Jeremiah was promptly interro-

[1] 1 Sam. xvi.

gated by the princes, who were evidently suspicious of the king's loyalty to the fast-sinking ship, and "he told them according to all those words that the king had commanded"; and the historian, who was probably Baruch, adds with an ill-concealed glee, "So they left off speaking with him; for the matter was not perceived."[1] It is true that there is this relief in this passage: we are not told that Jeremiah's action was counselled or approved of God. Probably Baruch would not have ventured so far as that.

The prophets betray the limitations of their visions again in the personal imprecations which now and again disfigure the otherwise fair pages of their writings. It seems to be the natural law that he who suffered most was most bitter in his maledictions. Amos predicted a dark future for the priest who essayed to stay the voice of Jahveh's seer; his wife would be a harlot, his children fall by the sword, his land be confiscated, and he himself die in a foreign land.[2] Jeremiah was far from gentle in his wishes for those who conspired against him and his mission: "Deliver up their children to the famine, and give them over to the power of the sword: and let their wives become childless, and widows; let their men be slain of death, and their young men smitten of the sword in battle."[3] On other occasions, too, his fierce wrath broke loose against his oppressors.

It is not difficult for us, who are men of like passions with the prophets, to understand such utterances; nor is it difficult for us to realise that

[1] Jer. xxxviii. 14–28. [2] Amos vii. 17.
[3] Jer. xviii. 21.

they are hopelessly inconsistent with the teaching, "Love your enemies, and pray for them that persecute you." Amos and Jeremiah had many true visions, but their imprecations were never written in their hearts by the Spirit of God.

A frank treatment of the Hebrew prophet demands that such limitations should be candidly stated. But we should be careful not to exaggerate the shortcomings of the prophets. The real cause for wonder is not that there are such shortcomings, but that they are so few. The general character of the visions seen of the prophets is the highest attestation that they were men moved by the Holy Ghost.

The character of the men agreed with the character of their visions. The prophets stood out of the mass of men not only by their lips, but also by their lives. Isaiah saw that clean lips were a prerequisite to inspired utterance.[1] The seer can never be a rogue. In the long run no man can have high visions and lead a low life. There have been cases when men came near to it, but there is always a lack somewhere. Our Lord stated the eternally binding conditions in the beatitudes: "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." God is not visible on any other terms whatsoever.

Micah knew that he was full of power by the Spirit of Jahveh, but that the herd of seers were shut in darkness so that they had no vision. The evil character of their lives explained their inability to know what God's high purposes were. So Jeremiah, in denouncing the bodies of prophets, always connects

[1] See Isa. vi. 5 ff.

their false visions with their base lives. Origen long ago saw the truth of the matter, in this and other points; and I quote this brief extract: "In regard to the prophets among the Jews, some of them were wise even before they became divinely inspired prophets, while others became wise by the illumination which their minds received when divinely inspired. They were selected by Divine Providence to receive the Divine Spirit, and to be the depositories of His holy oracles, on the ground of their leading a life of almost unapproachable excellence, intrepid, noble, unmoved by danger or death. For reason teaches that such ought to be the character of the prophets of the Most High";[1] and we may add, the record shows that such was their character.

Our Lord stated the same truth in another way when He gave warning against false prophets: "By their fruits ye shall know them." And the fruit which Jesus meant was not only of the lips, but of the life as well. That our Lord meant moral fruits as well as eloquence or orthodoxy is clearly shown by another saying in the same passage: "Not every one that saith unto Me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth the will of My Father which is in heaven."[2] To call Jesus "Lord" is indeed well; but alone it does not suffice. Many may do that, and be barred from the Kingdom, a fate which will never befall a simple soul who does the will of God.

The Hebrew prophet was made what he was by Divine inspiration and by moral character. Another

[1] Against Celsus, chap. vii. [2] Matt vii. 21.

factor contributed a share to his equipment. The greatest of all was the best educated, for example. But inspiration and character are the two essential requirements.

Prophets are needed in every age. The model for all modern seers is found in the Bible. Then let him who aspires to visions of God not forget the fundamental condition, purity of heart. The more perfect a man's mental fitness, the higher may be his visions; but no matter what his other acquirements are, his visions of God will be dependent upon the cleanness of his life.

ADDITIONAL NOTES

(1) Ramah (p. 5)

SAUL'S servant said, "There is a man of God in this city,"[1] but the name of the city is not mentioned here or elsewhere in the narrative. It is clear, however, that the writer meant the city where Samuel resided permanently, for on entering the city Saul asks the to him unknown Samuel, "Tell me I pray where the seer's house is."[2]

The later narrative of the Books of Samuel always names Ramah as Samuel's residence; it was, in fact, his birthplace, residence, and burial-place.[3] It is plain that Ramathaim-zophim[4] is an error, and that we should probably read, "a man of the Ramathites, a Zuphite."[5]

On the authority of this later narrative nearly all Biblical scholars have identified the unnamed city of ix. 6 with Ramah. Budde, however, contends that if the author had known the name of the city he would have given it, and that the situation of Ramah makes it inadmissible here.[6] The author may not have known the name of Samuel's city, but it does not follow that even a later writer may not have been better informed. As to the geographical situation, it must be admitted that the journey of Saul and his servant[7] is not very clear to us.

The stages of the journey are given as Mt. Ephraim, Shalishah, Shaalim, land of the Benjamites, land of Zuph. At the last-named place Saul resolved to turn back, lest his father

[1] 1 Sam. ix. 6. [2] *Ib. v.* 18.
[3] 1 Sam. i. 19; ii. 11; vii. 17; viii. 4; xx. 34; xvi. 13; xix. 18 ff.; xxv. 1; xxviii. 3.
[4] 1 Sam. i. 1. [5] Budde, H. P. Smith.
[6] *Die Bücher Samuel, in loc.* [7] 1 Sam. ix. 4 f.

should worry about the searchers more than the lost. It is natural, therefore, that Zuph should mark the furthest point on the journey. If that is the case, then the land of Benjamin could not be the fourth stage in their course, but must have been the first, for Benjamin was their home and starting-point. Moreover, Saul would scarcely have said, "Let us go back,' if they were already returned to the vicinity of his home. Efforts have been made to locate Shalishah and Shaalim, but so far no convincing suggestion has appeared. The fact seems to be that the text is in disorder, Benjamin and Ephraim having been transposed. Changing the verbs to the plural, as the sense requires, and as the LXX. reads, we then get the following: "And they went through the land of Benjamin, and did not find them; and they went through the land of Shalishah, and did not find them; and they went through the land of Shaalim, and they were not there; and they went through Mt. Ephraim: they had come into the land of Zuph, and Saul said to his servant, who was with him, Come, let us go back." This makes the journey intelligible as far as we know it, and brings the searchers to a halt in the country of Samuel, for Zuph was in Mt. Ephraim, or on its borders. Cheyne's proposal to read Mizpah instead of Zuph[1] gives us a city with which Samuel was intimately associated, but the change is arbitrary and unnecessary.

The emendation proposed has this further support: the phrase, "they did not find them" (or an equivalent), occurs after each place-name until we come to Mt. Ephraim and Zuph, where it is lacking. The author here is concerned with the return of the searchers, and evidently did not regard Mt. Ephraim and Zuph as successive stages, but as essentially identical. Ramah, too, was in the hill country of Ephraim, and is very likely the place where Saul found Samuel.

(2) Amos iii. 7 (p. 10)

This passage has long been regarded as the classic instance of the prophet's foreknowledge. Steiner long ago said, "These

[1] "Zuph," *Encyc. Bibl.*

words contain the justification of prophecy in general and of Amos in particular." It has seemed to be significant that this view of prophecy should be found in the first literary prophet.

In recent days, however, the authenticity of the passage has been seriously questioned. All the arguments are summed up by Marti: (1) It intolerably disturbs the connexion. (2) It is of a different structure from 4–6, 8. (3) Its theological character marks it as secondary. (4) סוד "secret," except in Genesis xli. 6, is first found in Jeremiah, and גלה סוד (to reveal a secret) is found elsewhere only in Proverbs. (5) "His servants the prophets" is a favourite expression of the Deuteronomist. Marti quotes Löhr and Baumann in support of his theory that it is a gloss added long after Amos.[1]

It must be frankly admitted that most of Marti's premises are sound, but still I cannot accept his conclusion. Every writer inserts explanatory clauses which necessarily disturb the sequence of thought. We know that the idea that God forewarned the prophets of His intentions was common in Jeremiah's day, but it may have been held long before. The whole Book of Amos is full of the idea. He was warning Samaria because God had apprised him of impending disaster: why should he not state the doctrine which underlies his words? The favourite expressions of the Deuteronomist, or of any other writer, are not necessarily words coined by him.

The introductory "for" and the close connexion between verses 6 and 8 are the real problems. Driver says of "for," "The reason, however, following not in *v.* 7, but in *v.* 8, to which *v.* 7 is subordinate."[2] Oort changes כי to הנה,[3] and Oetli transposes verses 7 and 8. Löhr transposes and gives this order, 6*b*, 6*a*, 8.[4] We are somewhat distrustful of such solutions, aiming to remove a difficulty, but not succeeding altogether. The words in question, "The Lord Jahveh will take no action except He disclose His purpose to His prophets," do not

[1] *Handbuch zum A.T., in loc.*; cf. Davidson, *Old Testament Prophecy*, pp. 18, 77, 97; Cornill, *Prophets of Israel*, p. 35.
[2] *Cambridge Bible, in loc.* [3] *Theol. Tigd.* xiv. 135.
[4] *Beihefte zur Z.A.T.W.*, iv.

explain why Amos prophesies, that is reserved for verse 8, but why the prophet knows what will happen. In verse 6 Amos is trying to make the people see the signs that something will happen, not by chance, but by Divine act: "Shall harm befall a city, and Jahveh not do it?" Verse 7 is a comment on those last words, intentionally suspending the thought: Jahveh will do something now, and I know what He will do, for Jahveh discloses His purpose to His prophets. What follows this becomes clear: my knowledge, and the source of my knowledge, constrain me to speak: "The Lord Jahveh has spoken, who can help prophesying?"

In conclusion, it may be said that it is altogether out of the question to change the last word to "trembling," as Wellhausen does, or, as the latest suggestion in *Encyc. Bibl.*, p. 3870, to "feel pain" (יכאב).

(3) 1 Samuel ix. 9 (p. 30)

Thenius[1] has been followed by virtually all modern scholars in pronouncing this verse a gloss, and pointing out that since it explains the archaic word "seer," which is first used in verse 11, it should follow verse 11 instead of verse 8. The editor, who introduced the gloss, however, was not so blind as it might seem, for in spite of the explanation of "seer," the natural place for this comment is where Saul and his servant resolved to go up to the seer, not where they were asking for his house.

The verse is undoubtedly a gloss, but it must be remembered that a gloss may be more valuable than an original text. Cornill does not exaggerate when he calls this an "invaluable explanatory remark."[2] In the writer's time prophet was the current word for the man of God, and seer had passed out of use; but the office was just the same. In Samuel's day prophet means a member of the order described in chapter iv.; the independent individual was a seer. Nowack says truly that "originally *ro'eh* and *nabi* had nothing to do with each other."

[1] *Handbuch zum A. T., in loc.*
[2] *Prophets of Israel*, p. 12.

When did the term prophet displace the term seer? Kautzsch says that Amos[1] speaks of the *nebi'im* in the most honourable sense.[2] Amaziah calls Amos a seer,[3] but apparently in contempt. Comparing Amos iii. 7 and vii. 14, where Amos repudiates any connexion with the sons of the prophets, it would seem as if seer had become an unwelcome term, and that prophet was already applied indifferently to the higher or lower order, as was customary in all later times. The gloss may therefore belong somewhere near the time of Amos.

(4) Jeremiah v. 31 (p. 47)

The expression rendered "the priests bear rule at their hands," is not devoid of difficulty. The LXX. translators were evidently puzzled, but they render *ἐπεκρότησαν ταῖς χερσὶν αὐτῶν*, which Workman understands to mean "clap their hands." Most scholars render essentially as I have; Graf, "hand in hand with them," or, "under their discretion": Orelli, "on their side as their agents": Hitzig, "come forward according to their direction." Giesebrecht translates, "the priests rule according to their own pleasure," and refers to Pashhur's persecution of Jeremiah. Duhm departs furthest from the general view, rendering, "the priests put (money) into their pockets," following a rare meaning of רדה "scrape"; so Ges-Buhl.

Graf refers to Jeremiah xxix. 24 ff., where we read that Shemaiah a prophet sends a letter from Babylon to Zephaniah saying that Jahveh had made him a priest instead of Jehoiada. It may be doubtful whether the prophet is declaring a fact, or making an appointment. If the latter, it would support the interpretation of the passage which I have given. It must not be forgotten either that the verse rendered as literally as possible is, "the priests bear rule at their hands."

[1] See iii. 7.
[2] Hastings' *Bib. Dict.*, ext. vol., p. 672.
[3] vii. 12.

(5) Jezebel's Persecution (p. 56)

H. P. Smith holds that among the exaggerations of the legendary accretions in the life of Elijah we may count the assertion that Jezebel was an active persecutor of the religion of Jahveh. He says that Ahab had four hundred court prophets, whom even Jehoshaphat did not suspect; that Micaiah does not doubt their inspiration from Jahveh; and that Ahab gave his children names compounded with Jahveh.[1]

That Elijah in his despair exaggerated the extent of the evil[2] is natural under the circumstances. In fact, verse 18 shows that Elijah soon realised his exaggeration. Jehoshaphat may have admitted that Ahab's prophets said, "thus saith Jahveh," but he evidently placed no confidence in their oracles. Moreover, Jehoshaphat asks, "is there not here besides a prophet of Jahveh, that we may inquire of him?"[3] The question implies a distinction between Micaiah and the court prophets. Later in the Moabite campaign, Jehoshaphat asks Jehoram, "is there not here a prophet of Jahveh?"[4] The king's emphasis on prophet of Jahveh seems to imply that there were other prophets at the Israelite court.

Jezebel may not be quite so black as she is painted, but still the persistent tradition must be given full weight. Kittel is probably near the truth when he suggests that the Elijah story may originally have contained a section giving a detailed history of Jezebel's persecution.[5]

(6) Distinguishing Marks of the Prophet (p. 72)

It is generally agreed that there were two distinguishing marks of the prophet, the hair-mantle and some sign on the forehead. In a note to Stade's edition of the Book of Kings,[6] Haupt suggests a third mark, for he asserts that in order to disguise himself the prophet must cover a peculiar tonsure and

[1] *O. T. Hist.*, 188 f.
[2] 1 Kings xix. 14.
[3] 1 Kings xxii. 7.
[4] 2 Kings iii. 11.
[5] *Königsbücher*, p. 141 f.
[6] *Poly. Bible.*

the mark between the eyes. We have no evidence of such a tonsure among the prophets.

We have given proof enough that the mantle was a characteristic garment. 1 Kings xx. 41 is sufficient evidence that there was some mark: "he quickly removed the bandage from over his eyes, and the king of Israel recognised him that he was one of the prophets." The removal of the bandage revealed a mark which identified the man with the prophets. A.V. by a curious misunderstanding translates, "he hasted, and took the ashes away from his face." Stade suggests that we may discover the survival of this mark in Zechariah xiii. 6: "and he said unto him, What are these wounds between thy hands?" But "between thy hands" makes no sense. Lowe proposed to interpret "on thy chest," but without warrant. Nowack gives up the passage, suggesting that the text is corrupt; evidently he had not seen Stade's ingenious suggestion to insert ועל עיניך and thus get "what are these wounds (or marks) between thy eyes and upon thy hands?" This fits into the context admirably: the prophet in shame would disavow his office, only to be met by the question, whence then the prophetic stigmata between the eyes and on the hands? This proposal seems to have escaped G. A. Smith also.

What was the mark, and by what means was it covered up? Haupt insists that אפר rendered "bandage," is an Assyrian loan-word meaning helmet. The prophet put on a helmet, which covered the tonsure, and the visor of which would conceal the mark between the eyes. Jastrow agrees that the Assyrian word means helmet or headgear, but says the word in our text means a sort of turban.[1] Helmet is quite unsuitable to the text: verse 38, "he disguised himself with an 'aphar (bandage) upon his eyes," does not sound like putting a helmet upon the head; nor could we say "he quickly removed the helmet ('aphar) from upon his eyes."[2] Far more probable is the interpretation that it was such a cloth as Orientals wind about the head, and which could easily be wound over the eyes so as to cover the mark. Cheyne says the sign was a survival of the tribal mark which placed the Kenites under the protection of

[1] *J.A.O.S.*, xx. 137. [2] *v.* 41.

their god Jahveh.[1] Haupt asserts that the mark was tattooed upon their forehead. He finds references to tattooing in Canticles v. 14.[2] It is quite likely though that the mark was made by cutting, a very frequent practice among the Semites, and so was a scar. Zechariah xiii. 6, as amended by Stade, would support this interpretation. Tattooing is forbidden in Leviticus xix. 28. This mark was undoubtedly limited to the sons of the prophets, and the old custom among them would yield only slowly to a law against it.

(7) Jeremiah xi. 1–8 (p. 99)

This passage has been regarded as authentic by nearly all scholars, including Giesebrecht and Cornill. Duhm has raised the question of its originality, and Cheyne naturally follows him in doubting its genuineness. They start from the belief that Jeremiah took no interest in the newly discovered Book of Deuteronomy. Cheyne refers to Jeremiah viii. 8, "the false pen of the scribes has done it falsely," as showing the prophet's antipathy to the law. It is to be noted that (1) the LXX. lacks verses 7 and 8 of the passage, but they are not material; and (2) that Huldah was consulted as to the law's authority; but that does not prove that Jeremiah was out of sympathy with the code. Hoffmann goes so far as to say that when Jeremiah declared that God had not commanded sacrifices at Sinai,[3] his words are unmistakably aimed against the new law.[4]

On the other hand, Jeremiah's book is saturated with Deuteronomic phrases, a partial list of which may be found in Driver's *Deuteronomy*, p. xciii. Either Jeremiah had absorbed the contents of the new law, or his book has been recast by a Deuteronomic editor, the latter supposition being entirely unnecessary. If we have a reference to the new law in viii. 8, on equally good grounds we may find a similar reference, with a vastly different purport, in xv. 16: "Thy words were found and I did eat them; and they were pleasant to me, and rejoiced my heart."

[1] *Encyc. Bibl.*

[2] See his *Canticles*, and *Am. Jr. Sem. Lang.*, xviii. 231.

[3] vii. 21 f. [4] *Religionsgeschichtliche Vorträge*, p. 25.

(8) Ancient Shorthand Writing (p. 142)

It has been claimed now and then that shorthand writing was known to many ancient peoples, but so far little evidence has been offered to support the contention. Now, however, M. Leon Goudallier asserts that the existence of shorthand among the ancient Greeks and Romans is certain. I have not seen M. Goudallier's original article in *Cosmos*, but only extracts published in the *Literary Digest*.[1] From these brief excerpts it is difficult to verify the author's statements, or to form a conclusion as to their value.

He claims to trace the art clearly from Tiro, a Roman slave born in 103 B.C., who became Cicero's secretary, and who reported the famous speeches against Catiline, to which reference was made on page 141 f.

I had supposed that stenography was distinctly a modern invention. However, if Cicero's orations, Paul of Samosata's debates, Origen's and Chrysostom's sermons, Augustine's discourses, and the proceedings of the Council of Carthage, were all stenographically reported, as M. Goudallier claims, it would still be very unlikely that a reporter took down the words of Amos or Isaiah, and it is certain that Baruch did not write Jeremiah's prophecies at the time they were delivered.

(9) The Prophets' Writings (p. 160)

A distinction must be drawn between the prophetic books as they have come down to us, and the original writings as they left the hand of the author. It is firmly established that the prophets from Amos onward put their messages into writing themselves. But it is reasonably sure that we have no prophetic book in its original form. The prophets wrote, but they did not collect and edit; that task has been taken up by others, and was accomplished long after the prophets' days. The editors were not acute literary scholars, whose aim was to issue an authorised edition of the authentic works of a great prophet.

[1] Feb. 20, 1904.

The editors were themselves deeply imbued with the prophetic spirit; but they lived in a day when deference was paid to the written rather than to the spoken word. Therefore, their concern was to collect messages of God which tended to moral and spiritual rather than to literary edification. Consequently they did not scruple to gather into the one Book of Isaiah prophecies from many hands, and covering at least two or three hundred years. The contents of the prophecy, not its authorship, determined its value to them. The speech, not the speaker, should likewise be the measure of merit for us.

(10) Saul's Rejection by Samuel (p. 169)

Both accounts of Saul's rejection[1] are rejected by H. P. Smith.[2] The former he calls "a construction of religious bias," the latter is passed by as thoroughly unhistorical, "a free reconstruction and expansion of the former." In his latest work[3] Budde agrees with Smith, but holds that there may be a fragment of history in xv. 4–9, the story of the Amalekite war.

The section in xiii. 8–15 has all the marks of an interpolation. As Nowack has pointed out, it interrupts the narrative, and it places Saul at Gilgal, whereas verses 2 and 15 indicate that he was at Michmash. The narrative does not admit a change of position. The story makes Samuel's rejection of the king an act of injustice, because Saul waited the appointed time, and Saul did not appear. The other story[4] does give a good reason for Saul's rejection, according to the ideas of the times. Samuel does seem to have changed his disposition towards the king, and probably encouraged David in his efforts to gain the throne. The prophet may have kept himself in the background more than these later writers supposed, but his hand may be apparent for all that.

[1] 1 Sam. xiii. 8 ff., and xv.
[2] *O. T. History*, pp. 120, 125; Samuel, *in loc.*
[3] *Bücher Samuel.* [4] Chap. xv.

(11) Cheyne's Jerahmeelite Theory (p. 197)

Cheyne has recently adopted the most revolutionary theory of the Northern Kingdom which so far has entered the mind of man. The whole life of Israel is transplanted to the Negeb, or North Arabia. Some of the strange aberrations of this once sound scholar are found in his recent *Book of Psalms*. The application to the prophets is developed in the article "Prophetic Literature," *Encyc. Bibl.*, and especially on Isaiah and Jeremiah in his *Critica Biblica*, part i., 1903.

There was no prophet of the Northern Kingdom, and there is no reference in prophecy to that land. Elijah, Elisha, Amos, Hosea, Ezekiel, Joel, Obadiah, are from the Negeb; and all prophets either come from that country or have it constantly in view. The centre of interest is Jerahmeel, a place deserving a fame hitherto denied it; for it was the Mecca of all Hebrew prophets, and the subject of the principal prophecies.

It is true that the prophetic and historical books give no colour to Cheyne's theory, but the reason is not far to seek. Of Nahum i. 1 he says, "This is one of a group of passages[1] in which the names of the North Arabian oppressors of the Jews are cleverly obscured"; and again, with a fine lack of a sense of humour, "with a North Arabian background, many parts of Ezekiel assume a different aspect. It is no easy task, however, to undo the skilful work of an ancient editor . . . who succeeded . . . in well disguising the many striking references to Missur, Jerahmeel, Geshur, and Saphon."

Cheyne was never turned from a task because it was not easy. So he proceeds to undo the skilful work of an ancient editor who, for undiscoverable reasons, endeavoured almost successfully to eliminate Jerahmeel and the Negeb from the Old Testament. We will cite a few specimens of Cheyne's work of restoration.

Amos belonged to the Negeb, for the Bethel of vii. 17 is a Bethel in the Negeb heretofore unknown. That Bethel was in the Negeb is easily proved. In 2 Kings xxiii. 25, Jericho,

[1] Isa. xxxv. 8, lii. 1; Joel iii. 4, 17.

Bethel, Mt. Carmel, and Samaria appear to be near each other. The text should be emended to read Rehoboth, Bethel, Mt. Jerahmeel, and Shimron; so Bethel is in the Negeb. *Q.E.D.* Tekoa[1] is a corruption of Jerahmeel, and "of the herdmen" should be "a native of Harim or of Rekem." בולם is a clear corruption of Jerahmeel. "From after the flock" should be "Cusham-Jerahmeel" — the resemblance of the Hebrew is about as close as the English. Hosea's wife was an Arabian, since both Gomer and Diblaim are corruptions of Jerahmeel; therefore Hosea dwelt in the Jerahmeelite Negeb.

Nahum has been regarded as a simple problem, so far as historical situation is concerned; but that seeming simplicity is due to the skilful editor. So Cheyne restores the original difficulties: "Underneath our present text it is possible to trace a prophecy which related, not to Nineveh, but to the Jerahmeelite capital. The key is i. 1, where בליעל is miswritten for Jerahmeel." Joel is not a real name, but perhaps a corruption of Jerahmeel; Pethuel (Joel's father)=Bethuel=an inhabitant of Bethel, and so Joel belongs to the Negeb. Obadiah is not a real name, but a late modification of an ethnic, probably ערבי, the Arabian.

Jeremiah and Zephaniah do not prophesy against the Scythians, for the new light shows that the invaders were North Arabians; the new light is emendation—Geshur and Jerahmeel instead of Assyria and Nineveh. So the key to Isaiah i. is Cheyne's discovery that the supposed Syro-Ephraimitish war was really an irruption of Jerahmeelites. It may be added that there is very little left of the Massoretic text of Isaiah after Cheyne has emended to his taste.[2]

Isaiah xl.–lv. was composed in North Arabia. Ezekiel also suffered imprisonment and prophesied in the same country. The river Chebar[3] should be the river of Jerahmeel, and Tel-abib should be Tel-arab, mound of Arabia, or Tel-Jerahmeel. The strongest evidence, however, he says, is in chapter 38 f., where Gog and Magog should be everywhere Jerahmeel.

It is needless to follow this theory any further. Because of Cheyne's great name, this absurd fancy is likely to get a hearing

[1] i. 1. [2] See his *Crit. Bibl.* [3] Cf. p. 257.

which it ill deserves. There is not a particle of legitimate evidence advanced in its favour. By the same method one could prove that the home of prophecy was China or England, since all that is needed is to change the names and words in the text to suit the occasion. Less attention would be given here to this imaginative extravagance, were it not that Cheyne threatens us with fresh deluges of this sort of criticism.[1] Such sad mutilations of the Hebrew text and such perversions of Hebrew history do serious harm to the interests of a rational and sound criticism. Textual and historical criticism are the necessary foundations of any valid Biblical study, but an attempt to rewrite Hebrew history from pure imagination is objectionable in principle and barren in result.

(12) St. Luke xiii. 33 (p. 292)

Our Lord's meaning is not that some fate is drawing Him to Jerusalem, but that a prophet could only die at the hands of the Church. The peril to the outspoken man of God, in the olden days, came often from the State; for the State and Church were closely identified. When the State became independent it was no longer a menace to free religious speech. In the case of our Lord it is significant that the one hand stretched out to stay the mad passions of the frantic crowd stirred up by the chief officers of the Jewish Church was that of the Roman governor. Jerusalem, which should have been the centre, not only of religious life, but also of religious liberty, was as a matter of fact the centre of religious persecution, and the principal place of martyrdom.

(13) "Malachi" (p. 313)

It has long been surmised that Malachi is not a proper name, and that we do not know the name of the prophet to whom this book is due. Cheyne holds that Joel and Obadiah likewise are not the names of prophets, since Joel may be an error for Jerahmeel and Obadiah for Arabian.[2] Cheyne further

[1] See *Crit. Bibl.*, introd. [2] See Note (11).

suggests that Malachi is a corruption for Michael, the latter not being the name of the prophet, but the general term for any angel messenger.

"Malachi" is apparently taken into the heading from iii. 1, where it must be rendered "my messenger." On account of the similarity of language Nowack thinks that the heading to Malachi[1] is from the same hand as the headings in Zechariah ix. 1 and xii. 1, all three beginning with the peculiar phrase, "the oracle of the word of Jahveh unto Israel" ("unto Israel" is lacking from our present text in ix. 1). The LXX. and the Targums did not read "Malachi" as a proper name, the former rendering ἀγγέλου αὐτοῦ. The editor did mean Malachi as a proper name, however, for rendering "my messenger" will not make good sense in the heading. The Greek translators saw the difficulty and obviated by reading "his messenger."

(14) Meaning of נביא (p. 217).

It may be safely asserted that while apparently every possibility has been proposed, Biblical scholars are still at sea as to the root meaning. Most writers connect with Assyrian *nabu*, to call or name. Nebo (or Assyrian Nabu), whose name is essentially the same word as *nabi'*, is sometimes called a prophet among the gods.[2] Hoffmann proposed the meaning, "one who utters his words in a loud and violent manner with deep inhalations."[3] He connects idea with the drivel symptomatic of an epileptic fit. Cheyne thinks that the meaning "speaker" is not in accordance with the earliest accounts of the *nebi'im*, and suggests that the word is another form of נבע to effervesce or gush.[4] Bewer connected with an Assyrian נבא to tear away violently, therefore originally the prophet was one carried away by a supernatural power. In Israel, he

[1] i. 1.

[2] See Jastrow, *Relig. of Babyl. and Assyr.* p. 130.

[3] *Z. A. T. W.*, 3, 88 ff; so Kautzsch, Hastings' *Bib. Dict.*, ext. vol., p. 652.

[4] Similarly, Davidson, Hastings' *Bib. Dict.*, iv. p. 108.

says, an insane man was believed to be possessed of supernatural powers.[1] David's expulsion from Achish[2] and the demoniacal possession in the New Testament, do not support his view.

Cornill discusses the word at length in his *Prophets of Israel*.[3] He says the word is not originally Hebrew, and we must therefore go to the cognates. He dismisses the Assyrian equivalent as lacking the essential point, which he finds in the Arabic, where we get the sense "announcing" or "proclaiming." His example, Aaron as the prophet of Moses,[4] does not seem to me a good instance of the primitive use, nor is there sufficient basis in his derivation for his conclusion that Arabia is the ancient home of Hebrew prophecy.

The oldest use of the word is in 1 Samuel x. 5 ff., where "prophesying" certainly is applied to the excited singing and dancing to the accompaniment of instrumental music. Saul quickly succumbed to this influence, and, if we may in a measure trust the later account,[5] which is often regarded as a later version of the old story in chapter x., anyone who came under the spell was likely to catch the contagion.

[1] *Am. Jr. Sem. Lang.*, xviii. 120.
[2] 1 Sam. xxi. 10 ff.
[3] p. 8 ff.
[4] Exod. iv. 10 f.; vii. 1.
[5] xix. 18 ff.

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